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Giovanni Raboni and the City:
Tableaux of Milan

by
Maria Belova

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Abbreviations

Works by Giovanni Raboni:

PPT – ‘Piccola passeggiata trionfale’

NOOC – ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university. Revisited sections of Chapter 4 have been published in the following articles:

Belova, Maria, ‘Raboni traduttore di Baudelaire’, in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, ed. by Antonio Girardi, Arnaldo Soldani and Alessandra Zangrandi (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016), pp.281-290

Belova, Maria, ‘Alcuni esempi di intertestualità nella poesia di Giovanni Raboni’, in *Traduttori come mediatori culturali*, ed. by Sergio Portelli, Bart Van den Bossche and Sidney Cardella (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2016), pp.135-141

Abstract

This thesis sets out to analyse the image of the city in the writings of Giovanni Raboni, in both his own poetry and his translations of Baudelaire. Raboni makes frequent references to Manzoni, not as the author of *I promessi sposi*, but of *Storia della colonna infame*, showing particular interest in the plague and the Lazzaretto. While Raboni's writing looked to the future, it was firmly rooted in every aspect of post-war Milan, which he compared to the Milan of the preceding generation. The thesis investigates the theme of cityscape in three different ways, focusing on the cross-fertilisation seen in Raboni the critic, Raboni the poet and Raboni the translator of poetry. It explores Raboni's poetry and the evolution of the cityscape, drawing on the interaction of translation and urban studies and approaching the poetry through the lens of Russian formalism.

Chapter 1 provides the context for a detailed analysis establishing Raboni as a Milanese poet and highlighting the importance of the urban setting and architecture through the framework of critics including Benjamin, Certeau, and Augé. Chapter 2 looks at the *motif* of walking through Porta Venezia, Raboni's favourite area of Milan, closely analysing the use of space and time in his *poèmes en prose* 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale' and 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere' and drawing on insights provided by two of his essays. Chapter 3, through a close reading of a selection of Raboni's poems, investigates the urban space in domestic and public areas including such typical elements of cityscape as houses, streets, cinemas, and squares. Finally, Chapter 4 considers Raboni's work as a translator of Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* and looks closely at the interaction between Raboni the poet and Raboni the translator. Thus, the thesis shifts from a focus on Raboni's own city of Milan to Baudelaire's city, Paris.

Introduction

‘Milano è il mio mondo, è l'oggetto della mia esperienza’.

(Raboni)¹

*‘Milano è adatta alla poesia proprio per le sue asperità,
per la sua invivibilità. Da Baudelaire in poi, è così di
tutte le metropoli’.*

(Raboni)²

Despite being one of the key figures in the post-war Italian literary and intellectual milieu, Giovanni Raboni (1932-2004) is still not studied enough. Critics often place Raboni in an Italian rather than an international context, primarily because he is rooted in one Italian city. However, the shift from the national picture to the wider context has already been highlighted by some academics and will bring a better understanding of Raboni’s writings.³ One of the aims of my thesis, therefore, is to view Raboni’s work through and in relation to his translations.

i. Space and city in literature: mapping Raboni’s geography

The last two decades have seen a growing interest in spatiality owing to the ‘spatial turn’ in literature and resulting in numerous recent studies. The term ‘spatial turn’ was coined by American geographer Edward Soja in *Postmodern*

¹ Raboni in Roberto Carnero, ‘Di Storia in storia, la poesia di Giovanni Raboni: A colloquio con lo scrittore cui domani viene assegnato il prestigioso Librex Montale’, *L’Unità*, 27 April 2003, p. 26.

² Raboni in Francesco Durante, ‘La vita, la morte in quattordici versi’, *Il Mattino*, 23 February 1994, p.17.

³ Luca Daino, ‘Raboni e il modernismo anglosassone’, *l’immaginazione*, 289 (2015), 18–20.

Geographies (1989)⁴ initially referring to the increasing number of French social science researchers such as Henri Lefebvre,⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,⁶ and Michel Foucault,⁷ who wrote about space primarily in the 1960s and 1970s and also Michel de Certeau⁸ and Marc Augé⁹ in the 1980s and 1990s.

Robert T. Tally Jr. in his current book *Spatiality* gives an overview of the recent ‘spatial’ trends in literature.¹⁰ He explores the meta-discourse about concept spatiality, looking at such terms as ‘literary cartography’, ‘literary geography’ and ‘geo-criticism.’ Although these three methods differ they put place, space and mapping of the literary text at the heart of analysis. In my thesis I will endeavour to map both Raboni’s real and imagined representation of the geographical location in Milan.

Regarding the omnipresence of space and ‘time-space compression’ identified by David Harvey,¹¹ Emmanuelle Peraldo points out that space ‘is now considered as a central metaphor and *topos* in literature, and literary criticism has seized space as a new tool and stake’.¹² In addition to *Literature and Geography: The Writing of Space throughout History* edited by Peraldo, I will draw on the other collective monograph by Verena Andermatt Conley entitled *Spatial Ecologies*:

⁴ Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).

⁵ See, first of all Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); see also Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (New York; London: Continuum, 2004); Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. and ed. by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁷ Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon, *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); Michel Foucault, *Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1991).

⁸ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984); Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life. Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, ed. by Luce Giard, trans. by Timothy J. Tomasik (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

⁹ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. by John Howe (London: Verso, 1995).

¹⁰ Robert T. Tally Jr, *Spatiality*, The New Critical Idiom (London; New York: Routledge, 2013).

¹¹ See ‘Time-space compression and the postmodern condition’ in David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 284–307.

¹² Emmanuelle Peraldo, ed., *Literature and Geography: The Writing of Space throughout History* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), p. 1.

Urban Sites, State and World-space in French Cultural Theory.¹³ I believe that this wider context, with inputs from recent researchers about spatiality, will shed new light on the urban writings of Raboni the Milanese poet who from his first book was considered a poet of the city.

Le case della Vetra (1966), Raboni's first published collection, was not in fact his first written collection but considered to be his third.¹⁴ (The first collection, entitled *Gesta Romanorum*, was published the following year in 1967.)¹⁵ The title of *Le case della Vetra* includes references to both space and the cityscape that I analyse in this thesis, namely dwellings ('le case') and the square ('la piazza della Vetra'). Chapter 3 analyses these two characteristics of urban lifestyle reflected in the opposition of public space and domestic private space. Critics point out the connection between space, movement and poetic discourse, where space and location act as guides to develop the whole dynamic of the book. Baudelaire also wrote about the connection between literature and architecture, comparing the dimensions of a house with literary writing, where measurements are lines instead of square meters:

Quelque belle que soit une maison, elle est avant tout, - avant que sa beauté soit démontrée, - tant de mètres de haut sur tant de large. - De même la littérature, qui est la matière la plus inappréciable, - est avant tout un remplissage de colonnes ; et l'architecte littéraire, dont le nom seul n'est pas une chance de bénéfice, doit vendre à tous prix.¹⁶

For Raboni, the city and its urban reality became both foreground and background of the poetic discourse:

I piani tematici de *Le case della Vetra* sono legati tra di loro in un struttura isotopica da una dominante spaziale: il libro è percorso da una fitta serie di *indicazioni di luogo* che pare generare i movimenti del discorso della poesia e costituire il tratto più evidente della sua continuità. Il rapporto *indicazioni spaziale-azione* nei termini di sfondo-primo piano è completamente rovesciato: ancor prima che le *personae* o i vari livelli semantici il Tema

¹³ Verena Andermatt Conley, *Spatial Ecologies: Urban Sites, State and World-Space in French Cultural Theory*, Contemporary French and Francophone Cultures, 21 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012).

¹⁴ Giovanni Raboni, *Le case della Vetra* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966).

¹⁵ Giovanni Raboni, *Gesta Romanorum. Venti poesie 1949-1954* (Milan: Lampugnani Nigri, 1967).

¹⁶ Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire*, 7 vols. (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères Libraires Éditeurs, 1868), III, p. 280.

qui è lo spazio: una città marginale, percorsa da presenze inquietanti e colta nella sua fatiscenza e nelle sue trasformazioni [my emphasis].¹⁷

During his lifetime Raboni published 10 collections of verse: *Le case della Vetra* (1966), *Gesta Romanorum* (1967), *Cadenza d'inganno* (1975), *Nel grave sogno* (1982), *Canzonette mortali* (1986), *A tanto caro sangue* (1988), *Versi guerrieri e amorosi* (1990), *Ogni terzo pensiero* (1993), *Quare tristis* (1998) and *Barlumi di storia* (2002).¹⁸ In 2006, *Ultimi versi* his last collection of poetry, which also included poems by fellow poet Patrizia Valduga, was published posthumously.¹⁹ Although the backdrop of location is so crucial for Raboni that it almost becomes the foreground, chronotopos is generally one of the first elements to be analysed in a text: when it was written and where the events are set. For example, Franco Moretti is still trying to create a huge database in order to build a map of literary texts.²⁰ In his project Moretti examines them through a geographical prism employing literal and metaphorical geographical language for the literary – historical mapping of world literature. His quantitative analysis explores not only the imaginary and real space within individual texts, but also their circulation and the interplay of different types of space and their representation. Some other scholars employ the methods of literary geography and literary cartography developing such projects as *A literary Atlas of Europe*,²¹ the website Mappingwriting by Robert Clark,²² or Mapping St Petersburg.²³ These projects study the interaction between literature and place and visualise on a map

¹⁷ Enrico Testa, *Il libro di poesia. Tipologie e analisi marcotestuali* (Genoa: Il Melango, 1983), p. 45.

¹⁸ It is difficult to define the exact number of Raboni's collections since some of his earliest writings formed and became sections of later collections. For example, *Il catalogo è questo*, where 15 poems published as a separate book in 1961, became a part of the later collection *Le case della Vetra*, published in 1966. Similar examples of this are found in *L'insalubrità dell'aria* (1963), *Il più freddo anno di grazia* (1978). For full references see individual entries in the bibliography (primary texts), all the collections of verse, however, are included in the posthumous edition in Meridiani series. See Giovanni Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, ed. by Rodolfo Zucco, I Meridiani (Milan: Mondadori, 2006).

¹⁹ Giovanni Raboni and Patrizia Valduga, *Ultimi versi* (Milan: Garzanti, 2006).

²⁰ Franco Moretti, *An Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998); *The Novel*, ed. by Franco Moretti (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (London: Verso, 2007).

²¹ A collaborative research between Swiss, German and Czech scholars who map historical novels set in different geographical locations such as Berlin, Prague etc. See Barbara Piatti, *Die Geographie Der Literatur: Schauplätze, Handlungsräume, Raumphantasien* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008). See also the website 'Ein Literarischer Atlas Europas' <<http://www.literaturatlas.eu/?lang=en>>. [accessed 19 July 2017]

²² 'Mapping Writing' <<http://mappingwriting.com/about.php>> [accessed 19 July 2017].

²³ 'Mapping St Petersburg' <<http://www.mappingpetersburg.org/site/>> [accessed 19 July 2017].

geographic data from fictional texts. The last example for instance, refers to the project developed by UCL that looks at places in Russia's 'second capital' in *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoevsky and *Petersburg Tales* by Gogol.

However, literary texts alone are not the focus for analysis. There are numerous studies dedicated to the special role of cities for certain writers, including imaginary places in their body of writings and the real places from both literature and private author's biography: Calvino and Turin²⁴, Joyce and Dublin, Dickens and London,²⁵ Thomas Mann and Rome,²⁶ Tabucchi and Lisbon,²⁷ as well as the poets Alexander Blok, Alexander Pushkin, Anna Akhmatova and Saint Petersburg,²⁸ Saba and Trieste,²⁹ Paolo Volponi and Urbino,³⁰ to name just a few.

In terms of urban representation in literature it is important to consider not only the author's relationship with a certain place, but also the unique characteristics and peculiarities of a geographical location, because the Italian situation is relatively complex. Although Italy was unified very late in its history, patriotic

²⁴ Claudia Nocentini, 'Calvino in Turin. Writer and Editor', in *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy*, ed. by Robert Lumley and John Foot (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004), pp. 129–43.

²⁵ In 1998, while reviewing a book by Locatelli (Locatelli, Angela, *Il doppio e il picaresco. Un caso paradigmatico nel Rinascimento inglese*, Jaca Book: Milan, 1998) that included a rare text by Henry Peacham entitled *A Merry Discourse of Meum and Tuum*, Raboni pays attention to the elements of environment where the story takes place, comparing its description and finding roots of this text in Dickens: 'Storicamente preziosi, poi, i dettagli ambientali: locande e mercati, strade maestre e vicoli malfamati, cortile di fattorie e aule di tribunale; con un po' di buona volontà, non si intravede solo Henry Fielding, ma addirittura Charles Dickens'. See 'Henry Peacham: un Dickens del Seicento, tra locande e vicoli malfamati' in Giovanni Raboni, *Il libro del giorno 1998-2003* (Milan: Fondazione Corriere della Sera, 2009), p. 68. Considering travel, literature and Dickens, Raboni reads an extract from *Impressioni d'Italia* by Dickens, written in 1846, when he visited the house of Juliet. See 'Il piacere del testo con Giovanni Raboni', 1995, memoRaiRadio3 <<http://www.radio3.rai.it/dl/portaleRadio/media/ContentItem-8d707fea-dcb3-45e9-a691-29a49f8902a5.html>> [accessed 30 March 2017].

²⁶ Fabio Guidali, 'Thomas Mann e la consanguineità europea', *L'Acropoli*, 18.3 (2017), Appunti e note, 280 <<http://www.lacropoli.it/articolo.php?nid=1209#.WcJg9IraugQ>> [accessed 20 September 2017].

²⁷ Corrado Federici, 'Subjective Identity and Objective Reality in the "Portuguese" Novels of Antonio Tabucchi', in *Oral and Written Narratives and Cultural Identity: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. by Francisco Cota Fagundes and Irene Maria Blayer (New York; Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 202–24.

²⁸ Zoya Borisovna Tomashevskaya, *Peterburg Akhmatovoi: semejnye khroniki. Zoia Borisovna Tomashevskaya rasskazyvaet = Petersburg of Akhmatova: family archive. Memoirs of Zoia Borisovna Tomashevskaya*, ed. by Nina Popova (St. Petersburg: Nevskij dialekt, 2000).

²⁹ *Umberto Saba: itinerari triestini = Triestine Itineraries*, ed. by Renzo Crivelli and Elvio Guagnini (Trieste: MGS Press, 2007).

³⁰ Emanuele Zinato, 'Volponi: narratore e poeta del cronotopo italiano', *L'Ulisse*, 14 (2004), 11–18.

spirits in literature celebrated the idea of a united Italy many centuries before its official unification and it was through literature that people felt united.³¹ Yet until recently many Italians still spoke in dialects that differ from one village to another, even where the distance between them is only thirty kilometres. So there is an ambivalence that is also reflected in Raboni's formation: a strong connection to the canonical Italian tradition of Dante, and from the twentieth century Montale for example, but on the other hand a prominent influence and attachment to the Lombard tradition with links to Manzoni.

In fact, Raboni was often associated with the Linea Lombarda, even though he accepted this term, coined by Luciano Anceschi, with a certain scepticism. Raboni admitted following the Lombard tradition in relation to thematic choice and the civil engagement of his works. Furthermore, he supported and appreciated poets who wrote in the Milanese dialect, such as Carlo Porta³² and Delio Testa,³³ even though such poets were not included in the Linea Lombarda

³¹ Carlo Dionisotti, *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1999). In addition, a recent wave of scandals due to corruption and Tangentopoli created new debates about what was national and local in Italy: 'The regional versus national is also an issue that has resurfaced in the 1990s, in the context of a renewed debate over national identity after the country faced the scandals and investigations that brought down the old post-war political class and saw the emergence of new political forces'. See Giuliana Pieri, 'Milano nera: Representing and Imagining Milan in Italian *Noir* and Crime Fiction', in *Italian Crime Fiction*, ed. by Giuliana Pieri (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), pp.132–150 (p.133). See also Francesca Belotti, *Le strade del mistero di Milano: il lato più oscuro, misterioso e inquietante di una delle città più eleganti d'Italia* (Rome: Newton Compton, 2015).

³² 'Come suona Carlo Porta in italiano?' in Giovanni Raboni, *Contraddetti*, ed. by Vanni Scheiwiller (Milan: Libri Scheiwiller, 1998), pp. 33–34.

³³ Delio Tassa was considered by Raboni one of the "tre corone" del Novecento poetico' along with Clemente Rebora and Saba. See more in Rodolfo Zucco, 'Rebora, Raboni, la via lombarda (e oltre)', in *Clemente Rebora (1885-1957) nel cinquantenario della morte: atti del convegno, Rovereto, 10-11 maggio 2007*, ed. by Mario Allegri and Antonio Girardi (Rovereto: Accademia roveretana degli Agiati, 2008), pp. 209–43 (p. 225). When Raboni had to choose ten names for the Italian canon of the twentieth century, splitting 5 names for narrative and 5 names for poetry, he included such authors as: Svevo, Pirandello, Tozzi, Gadda, Volponi for narrative and Saba, Clemente Rebora, Tessa, Ungaretti, Luzi for poetry: 'Dieci nomi sono terribilmente pochi per un secolo così vicino e così complicato. Ovunque si posi lo sguardo, compaiono facce di maestri: quelli da cui abbiamo imparato, o creduto di imparare, quando sembrava che la letteratura e il presente fossero più importanti della vita e del sempre. Non resta, per fare spazio, che ricorrere a qualche trucco, per esempio spostando nell'800 chi, come D'Annunzio, più che stare nel nostro secolo lo preannuncia, lo prefigura, lo ostacola; e poi se non c'è Pascoli, che pur essendo nato otto anni prima è ancora più moderno e più grande, è giusto che non ci sia neanche lui... Ma con questo ho guadagnato, rispetto alla decina di Segre, un solo posto: perché le considerazioni che possono valere per D'Annunzio non valgono certo per i suoi coetanei Svevo e Pirandello; la cronologia non è tutto. E allora, coraggio: Svevo, Pirandello, Tozzi; per quanto riguarda la prosa i primi tre nomi da fare, secondo me, sono questi. E poiché ho deciso (bisogna pur darsi delle regole) di dividere la decina esattamente in due quintine, una per la prosa e una per la poesia, completo la prima con un nome ovvio, Carlo Emilio Gadda, e con quello che considero il

group of poets who wrote in standard Italian. Anceschi, in his article, refers to six poets from the third and fourth generation and includes in this group Vittorio Sereni, Roberto Rebora, Giorgio Orelli, Nelo Risi, Renzo Modesti, and Luciano Erba.³⁴ Initially this group seemed to be unified by the geographical landscape, similar to the English Lake District poets of the nineteenth century. However this group even included a Swiss poet, Giorgio Orelli, from the other side of Lakes Como, Maggiore and Lugano.

Raboni did not like the term ‘Linea Lombarda’, referring with irony to the meta-discourse that it created as ‘qualche favola critica’.³⁵ Nevertheless he acknowledged the existence of a Lombard group of poets (‘un nucleo di lombardità’)³⁶ united by the common moral environment of post-war engaged poetry. Moreover, the message of this morally charged poetry is rooted in the Lombard tradition of previous generations as in the writings of Manzoni, for example.³⁷ According to Raboni the engagement and strong civic emphasis on moral themes unified those poets that critics called Linea Lombarda.³⁸

maggiore, per la genialità di scrittura e forza testimoniale, del secondo '900: Paolo Volponi. E adesso, brevissimamente, la poesia. Montale non si può togliere? Certo che non si può togliere: siamo tutti suoi allievi, suoi figli, suoi nipoti; e io lo tolgo lo stesso. E dico che i poeti italiani di questo secolo sui quali con più serena e convinta fiducia scommetto per il futuro sono (in ordine di nascita) Umberto Saba, Clemente Rebora, Delio Tessa, Giuseppe Ungaretti e Mario Luzi; avendo intanto, si capisce, almeno altrettanti nomi altrettanto profondamente scolpiti nella mente e nel cuore’. See Giovanni Raboni, ‘E allora io tolgo Montale e aggiungo Volponi’, *Corriere della Sera*, 4 July 1998, p. 33.

³⁴ Luciano Anceschi, *Del barocco ed altre prove* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1953), pp. 199–221; Tommaso Lisa, *Le poetiche dell’oggetto da Luciano Anceschi ai Novissimi: linee evolutive di un’istituzione della poesia del Novecento* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2007), pp. 43–53; Davide De Camilli, “‘Linea Lombarda’ trant’anni dopo”, *Italianistica*, 14.2 (1985), 289–96.

³⁵ ‘Giovanni Raboni’, *Poeti al microfono*, programme by Fabio Doplicher and Mario Mattia Giorgetti, Rai Podcast Webradio 6, (1985) re-broadcasted in 2016 <<https://player.fm/series/rai-podcast-webradio-6/poeti-al-microfono-giovanni-raboni>> [accessed 30 March 2017].

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ ‘La tradizione lombarda, in cui io mi riconosco pienamente, credo sia qualcosa di sostanzialmente diverso da quella che la storiografia del Novecento intende come “linea lombarda” – che non ho mai capito bene cosa sia. Io mi riconosco o spero di potermi riconoscere nella grande tradizione lombarda che comincia con l’Illuminismo e passa attraverso Manzoni e arriva fino a Tessa, a Gadda, a Vittorio Sereni, a Clemente Rebora. Ecco, io credo a questa lombardità in letteratura, e mi sento onorato se mi chiamano lombardo da questo punto di vista’. See Raboni cited in Vaduga, ‘Introduzione’, in Giovanni Raboni, *Nell’ora delle cenere*, ed. by Patrizia Valduga, *Un secolo di poesia* (Milan: Corriere della Sera, 2012), pp. 5–11 (p. 8).

³⁸ ‘Io credo che la linea lombarda sia qualcosa di realmente esistente anche se fosse stato oggetto di qualche favola critica, diciamo, però sicuramente esiste un nucleo di lombardità nella poesia del dopoguerra, di questo dopoguerra. Io più che ha delle costanti formali che forse ci sono un po’ incidentalmente sarei portato a credere a un clima morale comune che del resto è nella letteratura lombarda non nuovo, insomma, io faccio risalire addirittura all’Illuminismo lombardo, e a Manzoni naturalmente. Quindi mi sembra che quella che sia chiamata una linea lombarda sia

One more aspect to consider in relation to literature and geography, which is important for this thesis, is that poetry implies chronotopos in a different way: if in narrative format the date is often incorporated in the body of the text, in poetry the spatial and temporal characteristics are more vague and less specific. The date is a crucial element, and the location often refers to the place where the poem was written. Both of these are often located at the bottom of the poem, in the title of the collection or in the poem's title. Thus, poetry differs from narrative writing in that it indicates not just the location of the narrative but also where it was written, just as travellers write a diary or a travel journal to record the fresh emotions stimulated by the experience of a new location.³⁹ Place inspires poets to create and there are studies about this type of experience seen in authors like Rilke and Brodsky with Venice,⁴⁰ Pushkin and Tolstoy in the Caucasus.⁴¹ So we see that Raboni's collection *Nel grave sogno* (1982) reflects back to his travels to the communist countries of the Czech Republic and the USSR. For example, this thesis analyses the poem 'Appartamento' written during his journey to Prague (see Chapter 3).

The situation with regard to Raboni and Milan is different because the poet lived in the city and it formed the backdrop to the majority of his poems. Milan was not simply the city of Raboni's birth, where he grew up and lived all his life, it was the protagonist of his works, his muse and even his beloved. Raboni uses the word 'innamoramento' when describing his relationship with the city ('Sono milanese due volte: per nascita e per innamoramento adolescenziale'),⁴² and even further defines his feeling with the French analogue expression 'coup de foudre'

una specificazione, sia una trasformazione di questa eticità, di questo impegno, sulle cose e sugli oggetti, comunque una forte intenzione morale che è una caratteristica generale secondo me della letteratura lombarda [my transcript]. 'Giovanni Raboni', *Poeti al microfono*, cit., [20:19 – 21:25].

³⁹ See, for example, a recent book about London and another Italian poet who also uses the sonnet form. Valerio Magrelli, *La lingua restaurata e una polemica. Otto sonetti a Londra* (San Cesario di Lecce: Manni, 2014).

⁴⁰ Birgit Haustedt, *Rilke's Venice* (London: Haus, 2008); Sanna Turoma, *Brodsky Abroad: Empire, Tourism, Nostalgia* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).

⁴¹ Boris Andreevič Uspenskij, 'Puškin e Tolstoj: il tema del Caucaso', in *Letteratura e geografia: atlanti, modelli, letture*, ed. by Francesco Fiorentino and Carla Solivetti (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2012), pp. 131–47; Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire. Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁴² Raboni in Carnero.

(‘mi sono innamorato della città, un vero “coup de foudre”’).⁴³ According to Certeau we read the city through movement and our daily practices. Therefore, in order to understand how the city ‘lives’ and be able to ‘read’ the city, it is necessary to live in it and carry out everyday activities. From the beginning of Raboni’s career the urban setting played a special role in his poetic discourse and critics highlighted the links to Milan. In a radio interview of 1985, Raboni admits that the city was always the central feature of his poetry and explains how the relationship changed throughout his career: despite his disappointment in the political utopia of the city, he continued to write about the city, although dedicating more space to his private life.

La scoperta della città proprio come teatro del mondo [...] ha retto tutta una prima parte del mio lavoro. Mi sembrava che tutto avvenisse nella città, che la città fosse simbolo di tutto, diciamo. Questo si è trasformato un po’ in una sorta di una visione d’orrore, cioè ad un certo punto in una fase intermedia - corrisponde più o meno con *Cadenza d’inganno*, il mio secondo libro, - riassuntivo - la città è diventata un po’ un inferno, insomma, sempre centrale, naturalmente, anche l’inferno può essere centrale, anzi è purtroppo centrale. Ultimamente [...] ho ritrovato una dimensione che in qualche modo è più intima, insomma, quindi la città è diventata un luogo dentro quale si continua a vivere ma ritagliando su uno spazio molto privato. Ecco, questa è un pochino la parabola. Però continuo a pensare che la poesia moderna, da Baudelaire in poi, è poesia urbana sostanzialmente, e quando il poeta si pone in una posizione diversa, lo fa coscientemente, ma sempre avendo questo riferimento, magari polemico [my transcript].⁴⁴

Critics call Raboni ‘l’ultimo dei classici’⁴⁵ because he evokes the traditional sonnet form, especially in his collection *Ogni terzo pensiero* (1993). In the mere thirteen years since Raboni’s death more of his books have been published: selected poems entitiled *Nell’ora della cenere* in the series of ‘Un secolo di poesia’; a bilingual edition with translation of a significant number of his poems into English by Michael Palma entitled *Every Third Thought*;⁴⁶ collections of his articles written between 1998 and 2003 for ‘Corriere della sera’ in *Il libro del giorno*;⁴⁷ a collection of his essays on Proust edited by his daughter Giulia

⁴³ Fiorella Minervino, ‘Non riesco ad abbandonare Milano anche se sono sempre più a disagio’, *La Stampa*, 4 February 2003, p. 3.

⁴⁴ ‘Giovanni Raboni’, *Poeti al microfono*, cit., FM.

⁴⁵ Testa, *Il libro di poesia. Tipologie e analisi marcotestuali*, p. 45.

⁴⁶ Giovanni Raboni, *Every Third Thought: Selected Poems 1950-2004*, trans. by Michael Palma (New York: Chelsea Editions, 2014). Until 2014 there were only two books of Raboni’s poems translated into English and they included a limited range only. See Giovanni Raboni, *The Coldest Year of Grace: Selected Poems of Giovanni Raboni*, trans. by Stuart Frieberg and Vinio Rossi, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985); *Giovanni Raboni: Selected Poems*, trans. by Tina Chiappetta (Stony Brook, NY: Gradiva, 2001).

⁴⁷ Giovanni Raboni, *Il libro del giorno 1998-2003*.

Raboni;⁴⁸ memories of his friends and colleagues edited by Valeria Poggi;⁴⁹ Rodolfo Zucco edited two volumes of Raboni's *oeuvre* for Einaudi, known as 'the white edition';⁵⁰ and published recently, *Dal quaderno di aritmetica del gatto Pastrocchio*, Raboni's book for children with nine drawings by Franco Matticchio.⁵¹

ii. Raboni's critical reception and critical glossary: 'inclusività' and 'architettura'

The tenth anniversary of Raboni's death in 2014 also saw an increased interest in the poet's work. Apart from the publication of Raboni's writings, several academic and non-academic events took place to explore better the rich corpus of his texts. In September 2014, featuring testimonies from fellow poets and translators, the symposium 'Milano per Raboni: omaggio a Raboni, poeta e traduttore' was dedicated to Raboni the poet and translator. In December 2014 a two-day conference, dedicated to Raboni's multifaceted activities, attracted international scholars and resulted in a collection of articles entitled *Questo e altro: Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*.⁵² In addition, I participated in and contributed to a special issue of an academic blog by Reading university, dedicated to Raboni, that includes two interviews (with Patrizia Valduga and with Rodolfo Zucco), a book review of Raboni's bilingual edition and his recent translation into English, and an article by Luca Daino who placed Raboni into the Anglo-Saxon tradition through a comparative analysis of two poems, Raboni's 'Portale' and T.S. Eliot's 'Triumphal March'.⁵³

⁴⁸ Giovanni Raboni, *La conversione perpetua e altri scritti su Marcel Proust*, ed. by Giulia Raboni (Parma: MUP, 2015).

⁴⁹ Valeria Poggi, *L'emozione della poesia: testi e interventi sull'opera e la figura di Giovanni Raboni* (Azzate: Stampa, 2014).

⁵⁰ Giovanni Raboni, *Tutte le poesie (1949-2004)*, ed. by Rodolfo Zucco, Collezione di poesia, 423 (Turin: Einaudi, 2014).

⁵¹ Giovanni Raboni, *Dal quaderno di aritmetica del gatto Pastrocchio* (Milan: Edizioni Henry Beyle, 2016).

⁵² *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, ed. by Antonio Girardi, Arnaldo Soldani, and Alessandra Zangrandi (Macerata: Quodlibet Studio, 2016).

⁵³ Luca Daino, 'Raboni and the Anglo-Saxon Modernism', *ReadingItaly*, December 2014 <<https://readingitaly.wordpress.com/2014/12/09/giovanni-raboni-critics-corner/>> [accessed 21 January 2015]; Patrizia Valduga, A Conversation with Patrizia Valduga, *ReadingItaly*, December

The publisher Mondadori decided to dedicate one of the volumes in the Meridiani series, renowned for the encyclopaedic breadth of information in each volume, to Raboni while he was still alive.⁵⁴ All canonical authors are normally published in this series, but Raboni's inclusion was one of those rare instances where the editor of the Meridiani started to work on the volume before the author's death. In fact, Raboni participated in *L'opera poetica*, dedicated to his *oeuvre*, and discussed with the editor of the book Rodolfo Zucco the material, structure and the comments of this encyclopaedic book of Raboni's writings.⁵⁵ For scholars, Raboni's Meridiani edition represents a milestone and a depository since it includes not just his poetry and some prose writings (*La fossa di Cheribuno*), but also some of his critical writings (*Poesia degli anni Sessanta*), some of his poetic translations (*Ventagli e altre imitazioni*), a translation for the theatre (*Antigone*), two of his own poetic plays for the theatre (*Rappresentazione della Croce*, *Alceste o la recita all'esilio*) and also some diary entries (*Devozioni perverse*). In addition, some poems are included in both the first and later revised versions (in *A tanto caro sangue*) allowing one to trace and evaluate the developments in Raboni's poetic discourse and general trends in Italian poetry between the 1960s and 2000s. Zucco, guided partly by Raboni, illustrates the wide range of Raboni's writings and the connection to his different roles, and uses the terms 'inclusività' and 'transività'.⁵⁶ In my thesis, I will also partly apply this approach of 'inclusività', often used to characterise Raboni's poetry.⁵⁷

Arnaldo Soldani, in order to approach Raboni's *oeuvre*, creates a mini glossary ('il vocabolario raboniano') highlighting four terms in this meta-discourse, namely 'inclusività', 'architettura', 'teatralità', and 'passione'. In relation to

2014 <<https://readingitaly.wordpress.com/2014/12/09/giovanni-raboni-memory/>> [accessed 21 January 2015]; Rodolfo Zucco, Giovanni Raboni's Poetry: a Conversation with Rodolfo Zucco, *ReadingItaly*, December 2014 <<https://readingitaly.wordpress.com/2014/12/09/giovanni-raboni-academia/>> [accessed 21 January 2015]; Maria Belova, 'Book Review. Giovanni Raboni, Every Third Thought: Selected Poems 1950-2004, Trans. Michael Palma (New York: Chelsea Editions, 2014)', *ReadingItaly*, December 2014 <<https://readingitaly.wordpress.com/2014/12/09/giovanni-raboni-voices/>> [accessed 21 January 2015].

⁵⁴ Raboni, *L'opera poetica*.

⁵⁵ See 'Nota all'edizione' by Rodolfo Zucco in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, cit., pp. cxlvi–cli.

⁵⁶ Rodolfo Zucco, 'Cronologia' in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, cit., pp. lxiv–cxliv (pp. xxvi–xxvii).

⁵⁷ See also Fabio Magro, *Un luogo della verità umana: la poesia di Giovanni Raboni* (Pasian di Prato: Campanotto, 2008), pp. 13–22; Pietro Benzoni, 'Su Raboni traduttore di Proust', in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, cit., pp. 291–319.

cityscape the most interesting term is ‘architettura’, which Soldani defines as one of the key concepts in the preface of a collective monograph about Raboni:

Un altro lemma di questo dizionario ideale sarà *architettura*, prima di tutto come senso della costruzione: dei libri, dei temi, dei motivi figurativi, degli organismi metrici, che sono tutti orchestrati secondo un progetto, tanto preciso quanto sottile, di richiami e parallelismi, obbediscono appunto a una scienza delle costruzioni insieme verbale e mentale, anzi talvolta rivelano proprio un’inclinazione, forse illuminista, forse manzoniana, certo ‘lombarda’, per la tabulazione razionale, per lo schema che non teme di ripetersi.⁵⁸

As a critic Raboni also teaches the reader how to deal with the text using mathematical and architectural terminology and emphasising that nowadays an interdisciplinary approach is necessary: ‘per i lettori d’oggi, abituati o perlomeno abilitati ad attraversare la superficie dei testi non soltanto con l’attenzione e la dedizione, ma anche con l’aiuto di strumenti propriamente scientifici, prima fra tutti la psicoanalisi’.⁵⁹

Although Zucco, Soldani, Magro, and Benzoni stress the two main characteristics of Raboni’s work, namely *inclusività* and *transitività*, studies of his work to date seek to separate Raboni the poet from his work as critic and journalist, and above all, from Raboni the translator. There are several distinct research studies, dealing with each separate field of Raboni’s prolific activity. In attempting to summarise Raboni’s critical corpus, I would like to highlight seven areas where I believe the current research can be placed. It is difficult to separate precisely each area of expertise, because there is often overlap with two or more areas. Despite this, a schematic approach can highlight existing trends in the critical reception of Raboni’s *oeuvre*.

The first big group includes studies dedicated to Raboni’s poetic production and includes, apart from one existing monograph about Raboni by Fabio Magro, contributions by Concetta Di Franza, Luca Daino, Marco Merlin, and Silvana Tamiozzo Goldman.⁶⁰ The second group of studies is pertinent to the

⁵⁸ Arnaldo Soldani, ‘Prefazione’ in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, cit., pp. 7-10 (p. 8).

⁵⁹ Raboni in Jean Racine, *Fedra*, ed. by Riccardo Held, trans. by Giovanni Raboni, 3rd edn (Milan: Biblioteca universale Rizzoli, 1997), pp. 7-8.

⁶⁰ Selected works include Magro, *Un luogo della verità umana: la poesia di Giovanni Raboni* cit.; Concetta Di Franza, ‘Prosa e poesia in Giovanni Raboni. Il fascino discreto di una

first as it focuses either on Raboni's use in his poetic works of a specific genre, the sonnet, or on a specific period of his poetic production (Borra, Girardi, Natale, Villa, and Zublena for example).⁶¹ Alongside Luca Daino, Anna Chella and Guido Mazzoni whose critical appraisals focus mainly on Raboni's early work in the collection *Le case della Vetra*,⁶² is a group of researchers looking at the poet's collections written in the 1990s such as *Ogni terzo pensiero* and *Quare tristis* and analysing the sonnets.⁶³ Concetta Di Franza, for example, considers *Canzonette mortali* to be a crucial point in Raboni's writings when he adopts the traditional form.⁶⁴ The third group places Raboni in a wider context, analysing the intertextuality and links with other Italian poets such as Dante, Montale and Sereni, and includes contributions by Di Franza and Santagostini.⁶⁵ With the fourth group, with contributions by Andrea Acribo, Maria Antonietta Grignani, Simona Brunetti and Anna Chella, and covering studies of Raboni as literary critic and journalist, we shift from Raboni's poetry to his critical writings about

naturalezza straniata', *Esperienze letterarie*, 36.2 (2011), 115–26; Concetta Di Franza, 'Suggerimenti danteschi nella poesia di Giovanni Raboni', *Rivista di studi danteschi*, 2.2 (2002), 389–410; Luca Daino, 'Metaletteratura come grimaldello del canone. Il posto di Raboni nel Novecento italiano' in *La letteratura della letteratura. Atti del XV Convegno Internazionale della MOD. 12-15 giugno 2013*, ed. by Aldo Maria Morace and Alessio Giannanti, 2 vols (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2016), I, pp. 581–591; Marco Merlin, 'Realtà e anacronismo. La poesia di Giovanni Raboni', *Atelier*, 9.3 (1998), 26–47; Silvana Tamiozzo Goldman, 'Intorno a *La guerra* di Giovanni Raboni', *l'immaginazione*, 289 (2015), 26–27.

⁶¹ Antonello Borra, 'Poesia e democrazia: il caso dell'ultimo Raboni', *Italica*, 88.4 (2011), 621–27; Antonio Girardi, 'Canzonette mortali: testo e sfondi', in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, cit., pp. 131–40; Massimo Natale, "'Parler de loin". Linguaggio figurato nel primo Raboni', in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, cit., pp. 107–29; Villa, Marco, 'Appunti per un commento a *Quare tristis* di Giovanni Raboni', *Per leggere*, 31 (2016), 65–108; Paolo Zublena, 'La lingua del gelo. Il più freddo anno di grazia di Giovanni Raboni', in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, cit., pp. 141–58.

⁶² Anna Chella, 'Nel cantiere delle *Caselle della Vetra*', *Per leggere*, 31 (2016), 179–214; Guido Mazzoni, 'La poesia di Raboni', *Studi Novecenteschi*, 19.43/44 (1992), 257–99.

⁶³ Carola Borys, 'Lettura del sonetto "Più morti che vivi" di Giovanni Raboni', *Per leggere*, 31 (2016), 23–38; Stefano Carrai, 'Il sonetto "Sono quello che eravate, sarò"', in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, cit., pp. 95–105; Matilde Manara, 'Dietro il muro del tempo: sul sonetto "Mai visto, da queste parti, un uguale" di Giovanni Raboni', *Per leggere*, 31 (2016), 9–22; Marco Villa, "'Da qualche anno cerco di invecchiare". Lettura per un commento a *Quare tristis*', *Per leggere*, 31 (2016), 39–65; Villa, Marco, "'Da qualche anno cerco di invecchiare". Lettura per un commento a *Quare tristis*', *Per leggere*, 31 (2016), 39–65; Fernando Bandini, 'Raboni primo e secondo', in *Per Giovanni Raboni: atti del convegno di studi, Firenze 20 ottobre 2005*, ed. by Adele Dei and Paolo Maccari (Rome: Bulzoni, 2006), pp. 11–18.

⁶⁴ Concetta Di Franza, 'Anacronismo come lingua poetica della morte: la donna e l'amore nelle *Canzonette mortali* di Giovanni Raboni', *Per leggere*, 31 (2016), 109–32.

⁶⁵ Di Franza, 'Suggerimenti danteschi nella poesia di Giovanni Raboni'; Mario Santagostini, 'Vittorio Sereni e/o Giovanni Raboni. Appunti', *l'immaginazione*, 289 (2015), 23–25. See also Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, 'Raboni e Montale: l'affinità segreta', *Corriere della Sera*, 8 July 2008, p. 43.

poetry and narrative.⁶⁶ The fifth group includes studies focusing on Raboni's other role as translator: for example, Pietro Benzoni and Sara Garau look at Raboni as a translator of Proust.⁶⁷ Lisa Cadamuro in an article analyses Raboni's translation of T.S. Eliot's 'Marina'.⁶⁸ T.S. Eliot was a strong point of reference for Raboni and he also translated *Murder in the Cathedral*.⁶⁹ This thesis examines some of Raboni's translations of Baudelaire in terms of representations of the city. Generally works about Raboni's translations simply compare him with other translators of Baudelaire, without studying his translations separately.

The sixth group, including articles by Uberto Motta and Maria Pia Pattoni, features a few studies about Raboni's work for the theatre.⁷⁰ The seventh group refers to Raboni's language and stylistic features and includes studies from all the aforementioned groups while shifting the focus to linguistic analysis. For example, Enrico Testa analyses Raboni's language and syntax in his first collections.⁷¹ Raboni's poetic discourse highlights poetic roots in songs and employs terminology from music combining these two disciplines and adding to his experience of working with the theatre. Therefore, to lines of poetry already imbued with a certain musicality,⁷² Raboni adds performance and theatrical

⁶⁶ Andrea Afribo, 'Un aspetto', *l'immaginazione*, 289 (2015), 14–15; Maria Antonietta Grignani, 'Approccio a Raboni critico della prosa italiana del Novecento', in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, cit., pp. 241–63; Simona Brunetti, 'Lo spettatore con dovere di testimonianza: Raboni critico teatrale per il *Corriere della Sera*', in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, cit., pp. 265–80; Anna Chella, 'Raboni, la storia per barlumi', in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, cit., pp. 345–65.

⁶⁷ Benzoni, 'Su Raboni traduttore di Proust'; Sara Garau, 'Un libro parallelo. Prime indagini sugli "Argomenti" della "Recherche"', in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, cit., pp. 321–43.

⁶⁸ Lisa Cadamuro, 'Su Raboni traduttore. *Marina* di T.S.Eliot', in *Un tremore di foglie. Scritti e studi in ricordo di Anna Panicali*, ed. by Andrea Csillaghy and others (Udine: Forum, 2011), pp. 189–201.

⁶⁹ T. S. Eliot, 'Assassinio nella cattedrale', in *Xenia. Scritti per Pietro Carriglio*, ed. by Renato Tomasino, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Palermo: Flaccovio, 2006), pp. 107–48.

⁷⁰ Uberto Motta, 'Per sentito dire. Su *Rappresentazione della Croce*', in *Questo e altro. Giovanni Raboni dieci anni dopo (2004-2014)*, cit., pp. 159–89; Maria Pia Pattoni, 'Il "marchio d'autore": Giovanni Raboni traduttore di *Antigone*', in *'Un compito infinito'. Testi classici e traduzioni d'autore nel Novecento italiano*, ed. by Federico Condello and Andrea Rodighiero (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2015), pp. 215–228.

⁷¹ Enrico Testa, 'Giovanni Raboni', in *Dopo la lirica: poeti italiani 1960-2000* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005), pp. 205–9.

⁷² Cacciari points out that 'la struttura musicale del testo di Raboni si scioglie in uno *Sprachgesang*'. See Massimo Cacciari, 'Per Giovanni Raboni', *l'immaginazione*, 289 (2015), 16–17, p.16. See also articles by Giovanni Fratello about Raboni's collaboration with the composer Giacomo Manzoni when he wrote poems for music in the theatre, 'L'improvvisa barricata contro la pena di morte', *L'Unità Roma*, 22 January 2005, p. 4; Enrico Girardi, 'La musica di Manzoni nel nome di Raboni', *Corriere della Sera*, 12 September 2009, p.11.

monologues using high register lexis and rhetorical questions. By contrast, at the same time Raboni's verse strives to employ everyday lexis and colloquial constructions. Mario Santagostini also analyses Raboni's poetic discourse and in particular his nominative constructions lacking any verb ('la presenza della frase nominale nei testi poetici')⁷³ and relates this to the tendency to adopt elements of colloquial speech: 'A scendere, insomma, dal terreno della lingua letteraria a quella della lingua in atto, viva o vivissima'.⁷⁴

Most of the research focuses on case studies and almost all lack the international trajectory. Raboni was mostly studied within an Italian context. However, as has been seen, Luca Daino illustrates Raboni's links with Anglo-Saxon Modernists such as Pound and T.S. Eliot.⁷⁵ He also highlights the importance of the cityscape in Raboni's poetry. Fabio Magro's unique monograph about Raboni, in one chapter,⁷⁶ also explores the topic of the city in Raboni's works, although referring mostly to poems from *Le case della Vetra* between 1955 and 1965 as his book is structured in chronological order. Unlike Magro, I decided to look at Raboni's body of work through an anachronistic prism and rather as a recto-reader:⁷⁷ instead of examining poems in chronological order, in Chapter 2 I will analyse Raboni's later writings and then return for some complimentary details of the cityscape in Raboni's earlier writings in Chapter 3. It is interesting to note that Raboni's translations of Baudelaire were never taken into account, although the cityscape is the main theme for both poets. The cityscape has never been studied within the whole body of Raboni's work because it can seem problematic to embrace such a vast corpus and inevitably would have led to many lacunas and omissions. However, by going through his poetic *oeuvre* and including inputs from his critical writings one can trace in a meaningful way the evolution of the image of cityscape that Raboni himself pointed out in several interviews.

As Raboni was not only a poet and translator, but also an astute critic of literature, he analysed the literary works and translations of other writers from

⁷³ Santagostini, cit., p. 23.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Daino, 'Raboni e il modernismo anglosassone'.

⁷⁶ Chapter 'La metafora della città' in Magro, cit., pp. 41–76.

⁷⁷ Anthony Julian Tamburri, *Semiotics of Re-Reading: Guido Gozzano, Aldo Palazzeschi, and Italo Calvino* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003).

different perspectives. His approach in *Poesia degli anni sessanta* (1976),⁷⁸ *Poesia italiana contemporanea* (1981)⁷⁹ and the articles in *Approdo letterario*⁸⁰ differs from his short, journalistic articles from *Contraddetti* (1998), for example about Alda Merini (*Un Nobel alla Merini. Perché no?*),⁸¹ Franco Fortini (*Che bel regalo di Natale: Franco Fortini*),⁸² or Apollinaire (*Apollinaire tradotto e inscatolato*).⁸³ As a translator, Raboni provided detailed comments also on his own translations (analysing every possible level of the poetry translations of *Les fleurs du mal*, such as lexis choice, rhyme, rhythm, metrics and his renderings in time). The significant body of source material used for my research comes from Raboni's own prefaces to different editions of *I fiori del male e altre poesie* published in 1973, 1987, 1992, 1996 and 1999, but also from renderings by other translators such as Bertolucci (in 1975), Caproni (1962, 2008), Bufalino (1983) and Raboni's other self-comments and translations of Racine, Proust, Molière, Prévert, Apollinaire, etc.⁸⁴ Some interviews and articles where he describes his views on translation are also available: Anna Dolfi's interview 'Giovanni Raboni (ovvero tradurre per amore)' in *Traduzione e poesia nell'Europa del Novecento* (2004);⁸⁵ a conversation between Raboni and a French poet Jean-Charles Vegliante about their experience of translating each other's work into French and Italian.⁸⁶

Susan Bassnett in her 'Writing and Translating' explores in depth the relationship between the poet, the source text and the translator.⁸⁷ In addition, the theoretical background for my research and analysis arises from Umberto Eco's *Dire quasi la stessa cosa: esperienze di traduzione* and his ideas on poetry

⁷⁸ Giovanni Raboni, *Poesia degli anni sessanta* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1976).

⁷⁹ Giovanni Raboni, *Poesia italiana contemporanea* (Florence: Sansoni, 1981).

⁸⁰ See, for example, Giovanni Raboni, 'La poesia che si fa', *L'approdo letterario*, 22 (1963), 67–70.

⁸¹ Giovanni Raboni, *Contraddetti*, pp. 71–72.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 89–90.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

⁸⁴ For full references see individual entries of different translations of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* in the Bibliography. In addition, see Chapter 4.

⁸⁵ Anna Dolfi, 'Giovanni Raboni (ovvero tradurre per amore)', in *Traduzione e poesia nell'Europa del Novecento*, ed. by Anna Dolfi (Rome: Bulzoni, 2004), pp. 625–628.

⁸⁶ Jean-Charles Vegliante, 'Scrivere, tradurre. Un dialogo fra Giovanni Raboni e Jean-Charles Vegliante', in *Nel lutto della luce. Poesie 1982–1997*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Turin: Einaudi, 2004), pp. 167–79.

⁸⁷ 'Writing and Translating', in *The Translator as Writer*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and Peter R. Bush (London; New York: Continuum, 2006), pp. 173–83.

translation in Chapter 11 ‘Quando cambia la sostanza’.⁸⁸ In order to understand the difficulty of such a challenging source text as *Les fleurs du mal*, I also studied the comments of both Italian and non-Italian translators and a significant analysis by Clive Scott in *Translating Baudelaire*.⁸⁹

Raboni admitted that reading Erich Auerbach⁹⁰ and Albert Thibaudet⁹¹ while translating Baudelaire was important to him, and it has been useful to analyse these two writings in order to appreciate to what extent Raboni the translator influenced Raboni the poet in terms of city representation. In addition, other works by Benjamin, Richter, Hiddleston, and Peyre are also important with regard to the cityscape in Baudelaire.⁹² It comes as no surprise that many scholars of literature, philosophy and social science, when focusing on the city mention Baudelaire as a first point of reference. Just some examples can be found in works by David Harvey,⁹³ Eric Prieto⁹⁴ and Sandra Ponzanesi.⁹⁵ In addition, the concept of *flâneur*, developed by Baudelaire and studied in depth by Benjamin, is one of the key elements in Raboni’s poetry. Raboni uses it even in one of his last poems ‘Piazza’ recalling his father and embedding it in his father’s indirect speech: ‘C’è mio padre che pure, a quanto so, | da queste parti non c’è mai venuto | ma sembra contento di passeggiare | (lui diceva, mi ricordo,

⁸⁸ Umberto Eco, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa: esperienze di traduzione* (Milan: Bompiani, 2003).

⁸⁹ Clive Scott, *Translating Baudelaire* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000).

⁹⁰ Erich Auerbach, *Da Montaigne a Proust: ricerche sulla storia della cultura francese* (Bari: De Donato, 1970); Erich Auerbach, ‘The Aesthetic Dignity of the “Fleurs Du Mal”’, in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: Six Essays*, by Erich Auerbach (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1984), pp. 201–49.

⁹¹ Albert Thibaudet, *Storia della letteratura francese dal 1789 ai nostri giorni* (Milan: Garzanti, 1967).

⁹² Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002); Mario Richter, *Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du mal: lecture intégrale* (Genève: Slatkine, 2001); James Andrew Hiddleston, *Baudelaire and Le Spleen de Paris* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987); *Baudelaire: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Henri Peyre, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962).

⁹³ David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York; London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 275–276.

⁹⁴ Eric Prieto, *Literature, Geography, and the Postmodern Poetics of Place* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 2–7.

⁹⁵ ‘There is obviously a vast literature on the subjective experience of the city in modernist literature. From Charles Baudelaire to Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, from Franz Kafka to Henry James, the city has played a monumental role.’ See Sandra Ponzanesi, ‘Imaginary Cities. Space and Identity in Italian Literature of Immigration’, in *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004), pp. 156–65 (p. 156).

flâner) | sotto i portici, o di scrutare | l'interminabile crepuscolo | seduto a un tavolino del caffè | fumando lentamente | una delle sue Turmac con il filtro'.⁹⁶

Benjamin provides valuable theoretical insights not only in terms of Baudelaire and translation, but also in terms of his investigation of urban transformations. Some of his thoughts shed light on the image of the city in Raboni's writings since Raboni often compared Milan to Paris. Furthermore, a fundamental change in the approach of the French philosophers such as Michel de Certeau and Marc Augé also enriches the analysis of the city through the idea of movement and I will start my analysis of Raboni's cityscape from the metaphor of 'passeggiata' in Chapter 2.

I have also taken into consideration recent publications about Milan. The collection of essays *Italian cityscapes: culture and urban change in contemporary Italy* edited by Robert Lumley and John Foot provides some historical perspective on post-war Milan and the post-industrial landscape.⁹⁷ Raboni as 'critico militante' often includes his reaction to political and cultural news in his writings and embeds references to political events and transformations in his poems. According to Foot 'all the crucial movements, booms, slumps, and moments in twentieth-century Italian history have had their epicentre in Milan'.⁹⁸ Foot's approach to the fragmented city is relevant for the analysis of Raboni's work since the poet thought of himself as a 'cittadino di Porta Venezia'.⁹⁹ Considering Milan as a patchwork or collage, in fact provides the foundation for multiple researches about the northern Italian capital, such as *Quartieri di poesia, Re/search Milano. Mappa di una città a pezzi*.¹⁰⁰ The book *Il mito della capitale morale. Identità, speranze e contraddizioni della Milano*

⁹⁶ Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1343.

⁹⁷ *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy*, ed. by Robert Lumley and John Foot (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004). See also another book about urban studies in contemporary Italy by Vezio De Lucia and Antonio Cederna, *Se questa è una città*, rev. edn. (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1992).

⁹⁸ John Foot, *Milan since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2001), p. 3.

⁹⁹ Giovanni Raboni, 'Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita', in *La città narrata, le vie, le piazze ed i quartieri di Milano raccontati dai suoi poeti, artisti, giornalisti ed intellettuali*, ed. by Angelo Gaccione, pp. 271–76 (p. 271).

¹⁰⁰ *Quartieri di poesia. Milano in una galleria di immagini e voci*, ed. by Maurizio Cucchi (Milan: Meravigli, 2016); *Re/search Milano. Mappa di una città a pezzi* (Milan: Agenzia X, 2015).

moderna by Giovanna Rosa and the current collaborative volume *Milano città delle culture* also gives a deeper comprehension of Milanese representation in literature and the historical portrayal of Raboni's native city.¹⁰¹

For a survey of the representation of Milan in literature refer also to some books of collected Lombard writers of narrative and poetry, such as *Milano scapigliata*,¹⁰² *Milano d'autore*,¹⁰³ *Natale in piazza Duomo: scrittori milanesi raccontano*,¹⁰⁴ and the article *Milano da leggere*¹⁰⁵ for narrative, and *Poetica mente Milano* (edited by Raboni and Antonio Porta),¹⁰⁶ *Antologia della poesia nelle lingue e nei dialetti lombardi dal Medioevo al XX secolo*,¹⁰⁷ and *La Milano dei poeti*¹⁰⁸ for poetry.

The monograph of Daino *Fortini nella città nemica. L'apprendistato intellettuale di Franco Fortini a Firenze* offers another approach to a framework for the representation of the city.¹⁰⁹ In order to broaden the analysis of the city's portrayal and because of the personified image of Milan in Raboni's last poetic production, I also considered Steve Pile's *The Body and the City* and Niva

¹⁰¹ Giovanna Rosa, *Il mito della capitale morale. Identità, speranze e contraddizioni della Milano moderna* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2015); *Milano città delle culture*, ed. by Maria Vittoria Calvi and Emilia Perassi (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2015).

¹⁰² Leonardi, Giorgio, *Milano scapigliata: luoghi letterari e cronache cittadine* (Milan: Meravigli, 2015)

¹⁰³ This collection of different authors of Milan includes extracts from famous Lombard writers such as Carlo Porta, but also international writers such as Byron, Shelley, Dickens, Stendhal. See *Milano d'autore: La metropoli lombarda nella letteratura di tutti i tempi*, ed. by Franco Fava (Pavia; Milan: Selecta, 2015).

¹⁰⁴ *Natale in piazza Duomo: scrittori milanesi raccontano*, ed. by Paccagnini, Ermanno (Novara: Interlinea, 2013)

¹⁰⁵ Michele Turazzi, 'La Milano da leggere' in *Studio*, *rivistastudio.com*, 21 July 2014 <<http://www.rivistastudio.com/standard/la-milano-da-leggere/>> [accessed 16 September 2017]

¹⁰⁶ The collection includes thirty four poems about Milan by twenty poets: Maurizio Cucchi, Beniamino Dal Fabbio, Milo De Angelis, Luciano Erba, Gilberto Finzi, Franco Fortini, Milli Graffi, Giuliano Gramigna, Tomaso Kemeny, Vivian Lamarque, Francesco Leonetti, Franco Loi, Giancarlo Majorino, Gianpiero Neri, Antonio Porta, Giovanni Raboni, Roberto Rebora, Tiziano Rossi, Roberto Sanesi, Cesare Viviani. See *Poetica mente Milano. Raccolta di poesie*, ed. by Antonio Porta and Giovanni Raboni (Milan: Rizzadi, 1989).

¹⁰⁷ *Antologia della poesia nelle lingue e nei dialetti lombardi dal Medioevo al XX secolo*, ed. by Andrea Rognoni (Milan: Libri Scheiwiller, 2006)

¹⁰⁸ The collection also includes Raboni's poem 'Risanamento' analysed in Chapter 4. See *La Milano dei poeti. Ventisette autori cantano Milano: con testo inglese*, trans. by Silvio Raffo (Milan: La vita felice, 2015), p. 58–59.

¹⁰⁹ Luca Daino, *Fortini nella città nemica. L'apprendistato intellettuale di Franco Fortini a Firenze* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2013).

Lorenzini's *Corpo e poesia nel Novecento italiano*.¹¹⁰ It was useful also to follow the approaches suggested in the collection of essays *Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityscape* edited by Dom Holdaway and Filippo Trentin.¹¹¹ Although the book deals with the transformation of Rome, the eternal city, and not the 'nothern capital' of Italy, it analyses different elements of city representation in its fragmentary nature of the postmodernist's collage. Rome in its plasticity narrates its story through recollections of the past,¹¹² through the idea of circulation and 'endless movement' from Fellini,¹¹³ through the façades of its buildings,¹¹⁴ and through its expanding periphery.¹¹⁵ All these themes are crucial for Raboni.

iii. Spatial representation through its methodology and structure

Having identified some current trends in literary criticism in terms of space and cityscape, and having given an overview of Raboni's critical reception and the key terms in critical discourse about Raboni's *oeuvre*, I will now move to the evidence, combining the two previous sections of the introduction through the example of Raboni's poem 'Posto' (1965) which is directly related to the urban

¹¹⁰ Steve Pile, *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 1996); Niva Lorenzini, *Corpo e poesia nel Novecento italiano* ([Milan]: Mondadori, 2009).

¹¹¹ *Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityscape*, ed. by Dom Holdaway and Filippo Trentin (London, UK; Brookfield, VT: Pickering & Chatto, 2013).

¹¹² Marco Cavietti, 'Between Rome's Walls: Notes on the Role and Reception of the Aurelian Walls', in *Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityscape*, cit., pp. 19–37; Filippo Trentin, 'Marcus Aurelius and the Ara Pacis: Notes on the Notion of "Origin" in Contemporary Rome', in *Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityscape*, cit., pp. 101–17.

¹¹³ Fabio Benincasa, 'The Explosion of Rome in the Fragments of a Postmodern Iconography: Federico Fellini and the Forma Urbis', in *Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityscape*, cit., pp. 39–56.

¹¹⁴ James Robertson, 'Ecclesiastical Icons: Defining Rome through Architectural Exchange', in *Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityscape*, ed. by Dom Holdaway and Filippo Trentin, cit., pp. 137–53.

¹¹⁵ Lesley Caldwell, 'Centre, Hinterland and the Articulation of "Romanness" in Recent Italian Film', in *Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityscape*, cit., pp. 57–77. Pieri writes about the same tendency in present day Milan: 'since the economic miracle, the periphery of the city has started to dominate the historical centre'. See Giuliana Pieri, 'Milano nera: Representing and Imagining Milan in Italian *Noir* and Crime Fiction', in *Italian Crime Fiction*, ed. by Giuliana Pieri (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), pp.132–150 (p. 133).

representation.¹¹⁶ This short poem illustrates a limited differentiation between the terms ‘posto’ and ‘spazio’, ‘place’ and ‘space’ that will be used throughout the thesis and will be considered as interchangeable. Raboni used the title ‘Posto’ not to refer to a specific place or street that he depicted, but to indicate the absence or lack of room: the city space shrinks, similar to a fruit that shrivels, as it rots. (Palma in his English translation uses the word ‘place’ in this poem.¹¹⁷ However, the other poem, entitled ‘Abbastanza posto’ he translates as ‘Room enough’.¹¹⁸ I believe that the word ‘room’ better renders the idea of ‘posto’ for both poems.)

Posto

Si raggrinzisce

la città, perde sugo e odore la sua buccia se solo
pensassi di lasciarti. Non ci sarà
posto per camminare. Picchierò la testa contro i lampioni.
La crescita di foglie nei viali una cosa
che raspa in gola e mi fa vomitare.

Here, the trees and leaves of the last sentence support the botanical theme of fruit in the first sentence. Thus in this poem urban cityscape features elements of the landscape. The blooming leaves may represent the future (see Raboni’s other poem, ‘Si farà una gran fatica, qualcuno’ (2002), with its recurrence of the word ‘foglie’ and alliteration of the letter ‘f’ in its final lines: ‘E tutto, anche le foglie che crescono, | anche i figli che nascono, | tutto, finalmente, senza futuro’).¹¹⁹ The new leaves on the trees, usually evoking joy and smiles in the observer, by contrast here ‘scrape’ the throat of the protagonist and make him sick. The visual image in the poem transforms into a corporeal effect going from the outside - the streets - to the inside of the protagonist. The urban scenario is devoured by the

¹¹⁶ Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 113.

¹¹⁷ Cf. the translation into English entitled ‘Place’: The city | shrivels, its rind loses juice and fragrance if I were | just to think of| leaving you. There won’t be | any place to walk. I’ll beat my head against the lampposts. | The blooming of leaves in the avenues a thing | that scrapes inside my throat and makes me vomit. Giovanni Raboni, *Every Third Thought: Selected Poems 1950-2004*, trans. by Michael Palma (New York: Chelsea Editions, 2014), p. 145.

¹¹⁸ Giovanni Raboni, *Every Third Thought*, p. 107.

¹¹⁹ Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 1254.

observer and becomes part of him, hurting him and then returning to the street through the act of the vomiting and rejection of the body. The botanical representation of the city as a fruit here incorporates the love theme, ‘intimo fino all’imbarazzo’.¹²⁰ The idea of doing something wrong in case the protagonist might leave his beloved, transforms the streets with the trees and lights into a small narrow space where there is no room even to walk. Movement in Raboni’s work is linked to life’s journey and to the process of writing. Therefore, life would lose any purpose and the city would not leave any room for walking if love ended. The hostility of the blooming leaves replicates the urban image of lamp posts. First the protagonist hurts himself bumping into the lamp post and then the city also makes him suffer through its hostile leaves.

When focusing on the term ‘space’, I take into account different levels of meaning in dealing with Raboni’s writings. First, I analyse the physical features of cityscape (urban places and spaces) such as dwellings, parks, streets, traffic, hurrying citizens, windows, shops, and squares. In this category of ‘absolute space’ I would include the public space and the domestic space that I explore in Chapter 3. Secondly, I outline the invisible component of the cityscape that is an integral part of Raboni’s image of the city. Raboni re-writes a new space through his memories using the reconstruction of the invisible, demolished parts of buildings, remembering Milanese history but also referring to ‘spaces of representation’,¹²¹ for example through the metaphorical plague, used by other Milanese writers. The metaphor of the city as a theatre can be also included in this invisible element of the urban life in Raboni’s texts.

Apart from the physical and metaphorical image of the city, this thesis explores the term of ‘architecture’ not only as an element of city planning, but also as a feature of Raboni’s collections of verse and verse texture.¹²² The poetic discourse

¹²⁰ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Ormai ritrovo Milano solo nella mia memoria’, in *Milano, la città e la memoria*, ed. by Angelo Gaccione (Milan: Vienneperre, 2001), pp. 83–91 (p. 90).

¹²¹ The term ‘space of representation’ is used by Lefebvre and Harvey, for example in Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; David Harvey: *A Critical Reader*, ed. by Noel Castree and Derek Gregory (Malden, MA; Oxford, UK: Blackwell Pub, 2006).

¹²² There are several articles where Raboni explains the connection between the architecture and a literary text. See Raboni, Giovanni, ‘Al di là della forma’, in Umberto Riva, *Umberto Riva: muovendo dalla pittura* (Paris, Milan: Association Jacqueline Vodoz et Bruno Danese, 1997), pp. 4–9; ‘Giovanni Raboni’, in *Composizione progettazione costruzione*, ed. by Enrico Bordogna, Università Laterza. Architettura, 12 (Rome: Laterza, 1999), pp. 111–27; Ranconi, Luca,

itself is enclosed by boundaries and represents another type of space, namely poetic space. A lack of boundaries can be seen in the pages of Raboni's books, therefore further analysis of Raboni's 'poetic space', the physical representation of the poetic discourse on paper, gives a deeper understanding of Raboni's image of the city and through my analysis in Chapter 2 we see how the fluid structure of the poem reflects movement in the city.

In addition, Raboni speaks about the poetic space in some of his interviews, defining poetry as a space that allows freedom: 'La poesia è *uno spazio di libertà*, uno dei pochi che rimangono, uno dei pochi spazi, non dico non manipolabili... ma di fatto non manipolato perché considerato in qualche modo marginale [my emphasis]'.¹²³

The term 'spazio', referring to the boundaries embracing the poetic discourse, is used several times by Raboni. However, he emphasises not the boundaries that shape the space and create a poem or piece of prose, but the freedom of the poet: 'La forza della poesia è la sua marginalità, il suo non essere l'oggetto di nessun interesse di mercato. Il suo ruolo è questo: conservare la marginalità e conservare quindi *uno spazio di libertà* [my emphasis]'.¹²⁴

Using inputs from existing studies about Raboni, my approach will be to look at Raboni's poems through the lens of the Russian formalist school and especially research on the language of versification conducted by Tynyanov and his 'systemo-fuctional' approach.¹²⁵ I will also employ the techniques of scholars of the Russian-Tartu semiotic school (who were also influenced by Russian formalists) namely Mikhail L. Gasparov and his manual *The History of European Versification*, and Yuri M. Lotman and his *Universe of the Mind. A*

'L'irriducibile soggettività. Il luogo teatrale come crocevia di incontri e fughe', in Giancarlo Consonni, ed., *Teatro corpo architettura*, Università Laterza. Architettura, 11 (Rome: Laterza, 1998), pp. 132–50, Raboni in Giorgio Barberio Corsetti, 'Tutte le possibilità dello spazio. Il teatro come ri-cerazione della città', in *Teatro corpo architettura*, Università Laterza. Architettura, 11 (Rome: Laterza, 1998), pp. 151–67.

¹²³ 'Giovanni Raboni', *Poeti al microfono*, cit., FM.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Yuri Tynyanov, *Formalist Theory*, Russian Poetics in Translation (Oxford: Holdan Books, 1977); Yuri Tynyanov, *The Problem of Verse Language*, ed. by Michael Sosa (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1981); Peter Steiner, *Russian Formalism: A Metapoetics* (London, UK: Cornell University Press, 1984), p.52.

Semiotic Theory of Culture.¹²⁶ Research on the theory of versification by Tomashevsky provided me with an important theoretical outline for my detailed analysis of poems.¹²⁷ I also use Bakhtin's term 'chronotopos' that connects the historical time in the text with its geographical settings. Even though Bakhtin's studies are not related directly to the genre of verse, focusing more on the narrative format,¹²⁸ indirectly he developed a fundamental shift in the approach to spatial studies. So I employ a philological approach to the text, but I also look deeper at different layers of poetic composition and consider how the elements of the text reflect the theme of cityscape. My analysis thus will include such components as:

1. Chronotopos, with the emphasis on space rather than time as it is more relevant to a discussion of the image of the city.
2. Grammar structure, especially verbal tense, since 'it is impossible to disentangle space from time'¹²⁹ and these two categories of chronotopos 'are utterly interdependent'.¹³⁰ The analysis of time and space in Raboni's writings will illustrate how the poet erases both types of boundaries, spatial and temporal. There is only a linguistic grammar distinction between the present and the past.
3. The poetic space of the work since the structure and form in Raboni's discourse often reflect back the cityscape reality, namely his main subject matter. For example, by comparing the street with the river Raboni creates a 'fluid' texture of the poem (see Chapter 2).
4. Musicality and prosody are also crucial for the analysis since the phonetics support the main topic of the cityscape. In addition, as Medvedev points out:

¹²⁶ Mikhail Leonovich Gasparov, *A History of European Versification*, transl. by G. S. Smith, and Leofranc Holford-Strevens (Oxford ; New York: Clarendon Press, 1996); Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001).

¹²⁷ Boris Viktorovich Tomashevsky, *Kratky kurs poetiki = A Short Course in Poetics* (Letchworth: Bradda Books, 1971); Boris Viktorovich Tomashevsky, *Teoria literatury. Poetika = Theory of Literature. Poetics* (Moscow; Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1925); Boris Viktorovich Tomashevsky, *Stilistika i stihoslozhenie. Kurs lekcii = Stylistics and Versification. Lectures* (Leningrad: Uchpedgiz, 1959).

¹²⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel', in Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84–258.

¹²⁹ David Harvey, 'Space as a Key Word' (presented at the Marx and Philosophy Conference, Institute of Education, London, 2004), pp. 1–16 (p. 4)

<<http://frontdeskapparatus.com/files/harvey2004.pdf>> [accessed 20 September 2017].

¹³⁰ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, cit., p. 425.

Sound and meaning meet on the same plane – the plane of the artistic construction. Here they enter into a new interrelationship, one different from their interrelationship in practical or scientific expressions. [...] Sound in the poetic construction is not only an element of the word, phrase, or period – of language in general – but also an element of nonrepeatable phonetic unity of the whole work, and it is precisely as such that it enters into a constructive interrelationship with other elements.¹³¹

All these four above-mentioned layers of the textual analysis were employed in the Theoretical Poetics department of the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU) during my undergraduate and postgraduate studies.¹³²

My analysis is enriched by the debates between Russian Symbolists and Russian Formalists,¹³³ where as the former defended the idyllic style of poetic discourse, the ‘mellifluous verse’, the latter preferred to consider the prosody as a separate element of a verse that does not need a justification or further imaginary.¹³⁴ Scholars from both these approaches and their disciples studied onomatopoeia and the sound of the verse, which I analyse separately for almost all the poems in this thesis. The sound represents the key element of Raboni’s poetic discourse regarding his own composition of poems, *poèmes en prose*, and in his translations.

I believe that the words by Umberto Eco, written in his introduction for Lotman’s *Universe of the Mind. A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, can be seen to summarise the approach to analysis used throughout the thesis:

¹³¹ Pavel N. Medvedev and Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, trans. by Albert J. Wehrle, The Goucher College Series (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp.100-101.

¹³² Unfortunately, the major part of the works written by the professors from the Department of the Theoretical Poetics are not available in English but only in their native Russian. For those that are able to read Russian, I recommend the works of Dina Makhmudovna Magomedova, Samson Naumovich Broitman, Valeriy Igorevich Tyupa.

¹³³ I believe that the words by Medvedev about the approach used by Russian formalists and their diverse followers, written in the 1970s are still truthful: ‘Russian formalism is not only a unified system of views but also a special way of thinking, even a particular style of scholarly exposition. // It is true that formalism as an organic unity, a single way of thinking and writing, is to a certain extent a fact of the past. // However, formalism is not a fact of a past in the sense that it simple ceased to exist. In fact, the opposite is true. The number of its adherents have perhaps even increased, and in the hands of epigones it has become even more systematic, undeviating, and precise’. See Medvedev, p.75.

¹³⁴ Lee Thomas Lemon, ed., *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, Regens Critics Series (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p.xiii.

If we put together many branches and great quantity of leaves, we still cannot understand the forest. But if we know how to walk through the forest of culture with our eyes open, confidently following the numerous paths which criss-cross it, not only shall we be able to understand better the vastness and complexity of the forest, but we shall also be able to discover the nature of the leaves and branches of every single tree.¹³⁵

Chapter 1 consists of three sections providing first the context for a detailed analysis, establishing Raboni as a Milanese poet and highlighting the importance of the urban setting and architecture for Raboni. The last section of Chapter 1 connects Raboni's ideas on the representation of space to the French metropolitan tradition, since Baudelaire was analysed by the German critic Walter Benjamin and followed by the French sociologists and philosophers Michael de Certeau and Marc Augé. These scholars provided the framework for the deeper analysis and reading of Raboni's writings in the later chapters.

Chapter 2 looks at the *motif* of walking through Porta Venezia, Raboni's favourite area of Milan, closely analysing spatio-temporality in his *poèmes en prose* 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale' and the long poem 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere'. Both texts are from Raboni's late period and in a way summarise his life's journey, highlighting the important moments of his own biography. The poet recalls his childhood and other memories, looking into the past, and comparing the invisible reality with the visible urban scenery. The close reading of these two poetic texts draws on insights from two of Raboni's essays for the literary guides, *Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita* and *Venezia, Buenos Aires. Imprevedibile bazar*. In addition, the main theoretical support is provided by insights from Certeau's 'Walking in the City'.¹³⁶

From movement the focus shifts to the static elements of the urban scene, as such elements are of equal importance according to Motta and Pizzigoni: 'The city is seen as a combination of a series of smaller parts, not as a coherent whole – it is attention to detail which characterises the contemporary representation of the city; a pavement, a window, a flight of stairs, a balcony, a bench in a park, the four walls in a room – these are the images which have allowed us to represent

¹³⁵ Umberto Eco, 'Introduction', in *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, by Yuri M. Lotman (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), pp. vii – xiii (p. xiii).

¹³⁶ Certeau, pp. 91–110.

the city most convincingly'.¹³⁷ Thus, Chapter 3 investigates, through detailed analysis of a selection of Raboni's poems, the urban space in both domestic and public areas including typical elements of cityscape such as houses, streets, cinemas and squares. Liminal space is also analysed and continues the theme of questioning borders, tackled in Chapter 1 and 2, but crucial for the whole thesis.

Finally, Chapter 4 considers Raboni's work as a translator of Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* and looks closely at the interaction between Raboni the poet and Raboni the translator. The analysis of movement from Chapter 2 that is compared to the flux of a river in the poem 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere' will find its continuation in the last chapter, in the image of a fountain, because one of the analysed translations will be Baudelaire's 'La fontaine de sang'. Raboni's works as a translator will be also analysed through the poem 'Le Cygne', as well as 'Le Soleil' and 'Paysage'. I have examined Raboni's renderings from all five editions of his translations in order to trace the evolution of his work as a translator that we see echoed in his own writings. I will suggest some further potential examples of the dialogue between two poets, and between Raboni the poet and Raboni the poetry translator, regarding the urban representation. Thus, the thesis shifts from a focus on Raboni's own city of Milan to Baudelaire's city, Paris.

This thesis and its analysis in no way pretend to be exhaustive. Referring again to Eco's words, some leaves and trees will inevitably be overlooked in the thesis. These limitations will be reflected firstly in the material that has been chosen for analysis. I have suggested readings and interpretation for some poems – by Raboni and also Baudelaire – that cannot illustrate the whole breadth of Raboni's main theme of the cityscape. I have selected the poems according to several specific criteria explained in the course of the analysis. My choice generally reflects both the trends in Raboni's poetry and the evolution of his creative process. However, I have included some deviations – the poem 'Posto' mentioned earlier may be considered as one of them. Furthermore, I did not include any of Raboni's other translations for analysis because firstly, I wanted

¹³⁷ Motta and Pizzigoni cited in Foot, *Milan since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity*, p. 148.

to focus on poetic translations and secondly, in terms of the evolution of the cityscape in Raboni's work, Baudelaire seems more relevant not only from a subject matter perspective, but also because Raboni spent most of his life, translating *Les Fleurs du mal*; a period lasting more than a quarter of a century.

Chapter 1. Raboni the poet of Milan

*‘Raboni è noto soprattutto come poeta di città,
anzi di una città, Milano, profondamente amata,
anche se ritratta nei suoi momenti di squallore,
fin entro la cronaca nera’.*
(Zanzotto)¹³⁸

This chapter will focus on Raboni’s background as a poet of Milan that led to his multifaceted activities. I will draw on three aspects connected to Milan in his body of work in order to prepare the basis for the detailed analysis of some of his writings in the following chapters. Firstly, through elements of his biography and his formation I will trace the image of the city where Raboni grew up. Secondly, I will provide the bigger frameworks of Raboni’s work. I will stress not only his different intertwined activities in a literary field as a critic and journalist (‘critico militante’), and as a translator that shaped his poetic discourse, but I will also outline direct and indirect links to the cityscape analysing Raboni’s references to architecture and his poetic space. Finally, through the interdisciplinary prism, with the focus on the cityscape I will refer to scholars such as Walter Benjamin, Michel de Certeau and Marc Augé who wrote about life in the city from a philosophical and sociological perspective. I will also include inputs from studies about Milan by historian John Foot.

¹³⁸ Andrea Zanzotto, ‘Per Giovanni Raboni’, in Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, pp. xi – xviii (p. xi).

1.1. Raboni's roots and formation as 'il più milanese' poet

Among works by forty-three key poets, who constitute the Italian poetic scene of the last century, Jamie McKendrick, in *The Faber Book of 20th Century Italian Poems* (2004) published in the year of Raboni's death, includes two of Raboni's poems, 'Requiem' and 'My Daughter's Birthday'.¹³⁹

In his preface McKendrick presents an overview of the general trends in Italian poetry of the period, highlighting the urbanism or connection to the city that is one of the particular features of these poets: 'Many of these poets have been associated with "metropolitan" (Florentine, Milanese and Roman) literary groupings and factions but they have brought with them a kind of *sfondo*, an irreducible background that colours their perspective, and sometimes even their language'.¹⁴⁰ McKendrick notes also that some poets, like Bertolucci, prefer provincialism on a smaller scale, while others such as Ungaretti (France and Egypt) and Montale (Vienna and Eastbourne), opt for a bigger 'cosmopolitan perspective'.¹⁴¹

McKendrick highlights two trends explored in this thesis. Firstly, I examine the attachment to the city, namely Raboni's metropolitan representation, which continues in a Milanese tradition. Secondly, I explore Raboni's interesting multifaceted background (*sfondo*) that feeds his poetic urban discourse: the predictable cross-fertilisation arising from his different professional roles – literary critic, translator and poet – as well as his study of Law, and his interest in architecture, all of which enrich his image of the cityscape.

The words of the poet Andrea Zanzotto in the epigraph summarise some of the key elements of Raboni's writings and offer a good departure point from which to explore the image of the city. They position Raboni as an urban poet who loved his native city, despite its atmosphere of 'squalor', bordering on crime.

Milan suffered all the problems associated with transformation as it developed

¹³⁹ *The Faber Book of 20th-Century Italian Poems*, ed. by Jamie McKendrick (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), p. 144.

¹⁴⁰ McKendrick, p. xvi.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

with the economic miracle that began in the 1950s.¹⁴² Alongside a city that was expanding and flourishing, was the underbelly of Milanese life that provided perfect settings for film and literature, such as *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960)¹⁴³ and crime fiction by Scerbanenco.¹⁴⁴ This negative ambiance of Milan, as an industrial city with skyscrapers and automation, is depicted also in the novel *La vita agra* (1962) by Luciano Bianciardi.¹⁴⁵ However, for both Bianciardi and Scerbanenco Milan was an adopted city. They were ‘milanesi d’adozione’ (if such a definition exists),¹⁴⁶ not natives like Raboni, who was born and raised in the city and whose ancestors came from Milan and nearby Bergamo in Lombardy: ‘La mia famiglia è di Milano da generazioni, però con delle ascendenze un po’ più lontane, bergamasche e lombarde’.¹⁴⁷ At the beginning of the poem ‘Una volta’ from the first published collection, *Le Case della Vetra* (1966), Raboni is precise about his roots and ancestors: ‘Di gente ricca solo | coi bachi e le filande credo | non ci sia più nessuno: ma una volta | nel Comasco o a Bergamo, da dove | viene la mia famiglia’.¹⁴⁸

The disturbing elements of life in Milan, felt by the afore-mentioned authors of the *noir* genre, are also discussed in Raboni’s body of work.¹⁴⁹ From his first published collection, *Le case della Vetra* (1966) Raboni, as noted by Zanzotto, was seen not only as an urban poet but also associated with themes of injustice,

¹⁴² ‘Milan made the painful and traumatic shift from an industrial to a post-industrial city’ in Foot, *Milan since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity*, p. 2; Rosa writes also about ‘i margini soffocanti di una periferia’ in Testori’s books. See Giovanna Rosa, *Il mito della capitale morale. Identità, speranze e contraddizioni della Milano moderna* (Milan: BUR Rizzoli, 2015), pp. 304–305.

¹⁴³ *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, dir. by Luchino Visconti (Astor Pictures Corporation, 1960).

¹⁴⁴ For example, the series of four *gialli* written between 1966 and 1969 with the main character Duca Lamberti. See Giorgio Scerbanenco, *Venere privata* (Milan: Garzanti, 1966); Giorgio Scerbanenco, *Traditori di tutti* (Milan: Garzanti, 1966); Giorgio Scerbanenco, *I ragazzi del massacro* (Milan: Garzanti, 1968); Giorgio Scerbanenco, *I milanesi ammazzano il sabato* (Milan: Garzanti, 1969).

¹⁴⁵ Luciano Bianciardi, *La vita agra* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1977).

¹⁴⁶ ‘Milan has always been a city of shifting populations’. See Foot, *Milan since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity*, p. 6. The same idea was expressed in Raboni’s writings: ‘[P]er milanesi intendo, ovviamente, tutti quelli che vivono a Milano, indipendentemente dal fatto che ci siano o, come è più probabile, non ci siano nati’. See Giovanni Raboni, ‘Venezia, Buenos Aires. Imprevedibile Bazar’, in *Come ottenere il meglio da Milano*, pp. 161–64 (p. 162).

¹⁴⁷ Piero Del Giudice, ‘Giovanni Raboni poeta nella città di Milano’, *Galatea*, November 1997, 54–59 (p. 55).

¹⁴⁸ For a detailed analysis see Chapter 3. For the full text of the poem see Giovanni Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 34.

¹⁴⁹ For example, in the poems ‘Testimoni’ and ‘Risanamento’, analysed later in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 respectively.

illness, and persecution. The theme of metaphorical plague, in a Milan full of crime and corruption, pays homage to the canonical Lombard writer Manzoni from whom he borrowed the title and the toponym of the square. According to Certeau the names of the streets (or square in this case) tell us the history of the place.¹⁵⁰ La piazza della Vetra, that appears at the beginning of Manzoni's *Storia della colonna infame*, was known as the place of execution for criminals condemned to death. In fact, Raboni explained his thematic affiliation with Manzoni through the epigraph, using the words the Chief of Police addressed to the notary: 'È stato significato al Senato che hieri mattina furno onte con ontioni mortifere le mura et porte delle case della Vedra de' cittadini'.¹⁵¹

Raboni grew up into a bourgeois family in Milan:¹⁵² his father, Giuseppe Raboni, worked for the Comune di Milano holding the position of Head of Education, while his paternal grandfather, Fulvio Raboni, was procurator for Bocconi's brothers. According to family legend, when later one of the brothers died in Ethiopia in the Battle of Adwa (1896), it was Fulvio Raboni who suggested to Bocconi senior (Ferdinando) the idea of establishing an economic university in Milan – Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi (established in 1902), similar to the university already in Venice.¹⁵³

Both Raboni's father and grandfather had rich libraries and were avid readers:

¹⁵⁰ 'One must awaken the stories that sleep in the streets and that sometimes lie within a simple name, folded up inside this thimble like the silk dress of a fairy' in Certeau and others, p. 142.

¹⁵¹ The full quote: 'È stato significato al Senato che hieri mattina furno onte con ontioni mortifere le mura et porte delle case della Vedra de' cittadini, disse il capitano di giustizia al notaio criminale che prese con sé in quella spedizione. E con queste parole, già piene d'una deplorabile certezza, e passate senza correzione dalla bocca del popolo in quella de' magistrati, s'apre il processo'. See Alessandro Manzoni, *Osservazioni sulla morale cattolica; Storia della colonna infame*, I libri della spiga (Milan: Garzanti, 1985), p. 244.

¹⁵² 'una famiglia di borghesia, [...] "di toga" [...] di avvocati, di notai' in Del Giudice, p. 54.

¹⁵³ Fulvio Raboni's notes *In cerca di notizie di Luigi Bocconi* (1896) about his travel in Africa, dated 13 June 1896 till 15 July 1896, are kept in Raboni's family archive. In addition, the unpublished poem entitled 'La Parentela' written by Fulvio Raboni is also available: 'E Fulvio? Deludendo | le aspettative di suo padre, | rivolte a una carriera più umanistica, | lui vuol studiare economia e commercio | e siccome a quei tempi in tutta Italia | c'è una sola scuola del genere | lui prende e va a Venezia. | Se ne ricorderà molti anni dopo | quando i Bocconi, suoi padroni e amici, | gli domanderanno consiglio | sul modo di onorare la memoria | del giovane Luigi morto in Africa. | Perché, dirà il tuo bisnonno ai Bocconi, non fare anche a Milano | un'università come Ca' Foscari?' See *Il catalogo e questo: Giovanni Raboni*, ed. by Giulia Raboni (Milan: Altavia, 2009), p. 11.

In tutta la mia famiglia c'era questa grande passione per i libri, avevamo una biblioteca di famiglia e ricordo che di mio nonno, padre di mio padre [...] si diceva che la sera non tornasse a casa senza esser passato dalla libreria e aver acquistato almeno un libro. Dunque non poteva non essere trasmessa anche a me questa passione per la lettura.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, Giovanni Raboni's parents used to read him the works of Lombard writers Tessa, Porta and Manzoni, echoes of which would appear later in his own poetry and, as stated before, it was the insights from Manzoni's works in particular that provided a kind of matrix for Raboni's urban description of the city. Raboni recalled that his father kept *I promessi sposi* on the bedside table to read to him, so Raboni's discovery of Manzoni originated from oral narration and even before he was able to read: 'Mio padre teneva *I promessi sposi* - una bella ristampa dell'edizione del '40, con le illustrazioni di Gonin, che era stata di suo padre - sul tavolino accanto al letto. Ho cominciato a leggere Manzoni prima di saper leggere, per interposta persona; e non ho smesso più'.¹⁵⁵

'Manzoni' then 'relocated' from his father's bedside table to Raboni's texts, along with interesting details from Raboni's own biography. Thus, Raboni's writings in books and essays, revealed not only his literary links with Manzoni but also some geographical coincidences in his life, for during his childhood his family lived on Via San Gregorio next to the same Lazzaretto that Manzoni writes about - both of which were recurrent toponyms in Raboni's work that I explore further in Chapter 2. I also reveal more of Raboni's childhood by analysing two of his works to illustrate how the described walk on Milan's Corso Buenos Aires traces his biographical itinerary.

Raboni was born in the city of Milan and lived there almost all his life except for a three-year period during the war when, in 1942 to escape the bombing, the whole family was forced to move to Varese, also in Lombardy. Raboni remembered his childhood immersion in readings and referred often to this period of his life in his works: for example, poem 'La Guerra' (1986), the collections *A tanto caro sangue* (1988) and *Versi guerrieri e amorosi* (1990). This period also played an important role in relation to the urban dimensions

¹⁵⁴ Daniele Piccini, 'Vivere almeno al 50 per cento', *Poesia*, 16.168 (2003), 2-14, p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ Giovanni Raboni and Alessandro Manzoni, *Raboni Manzoni* (Rome: Il Ventaglio, 1985), p. 19.

(opposed to the countryside) described in his work, because the young boy recalled his return to his home in Via San Gregorio ‘un innamoramento’ and ‘una riscoperta’ of Milan: ‘È stata una riscoperta ed è stato anche un innamoramento; mi sono proprio innamorato delle possibilità anche fantastiche della dimensione cittadina, della dimensione urbana.’¹⁵⁶

The recollections of this time are full of hope and contrast with the recurrent presence of death in his work, ‘un’ottica mortuaria’ and dialogues with the dead that have been discussed by critics.¹⁵⁷ Raboni often referred to great figures from the past acknowledging the lack of heroic individuals from the present. Even though he believed in the ‘comunione dei vivi e dei morti’¹⁵⁸ and death was a dominant feature of his writing (‘la morte ha una presenza dominante’),¹⁵⁹ we can see that he looked also towards the future, optimistically forecasting the city’s great transformation during the post-war period: ‘Era anche, poi, un clima straordinario, quello del dopoguerra, di grande vitalità, di grandi speranze, di grandi rinnovamenti’.¹⁶⁰

In addition to the urban environment of Milan, opposed to the rural nature of Varese, Raboni recalled his Varese period as a ‘forzato/beato esilio’,¹⁶¹ because he was able to dedicate time to extensive reading of Italian, French, English, and Russian literature. Although he exaggerates when saying that he read almost everything in these three years, this does suggest the wide range of his childhood reading that underpinned his future formation:

Io sono stato un lettore abbastanza precoce. Ho cominciato a leggere allora, e mi sembra di aver letto soprattutto in quegli anni. Da allora, e ancora adesso, mi è sempre sembrato di rileggere quello che avevo già letto. [...] Per esempio, una delle esperienze fondamentali della mia vita è stata la lettura di Proust, che poi ho anche tradotto (l’ho letto negli anni Cinquanta). Però l’impressione è quella; e sicuramente ho letto, non capendone probabilmente nulla, ma insomma ho letto tutto Shakespeare, per esempio nei tre volumi dell’edizione Sansoni che è uscita in quegli anni, negli anni di guerra. Ero un lettore onnivoro e incosciente che avevo dieci, dodici anni. Ho letto naturalmente

¹⁵⁶ Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 1425.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Per non essere complice della realtà, il poeta adotta un’ottica mortuaria’ in Piergiorgio Bellocchio, ‘L’itinerario poetico di Raboni’, *Quaderni piacentini*, 14.57 (1974), 147–53 (p.148).

¹⁵⁸ ‘Stanze per la musica di Adriano Guarnieri’ in Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 966.

¹⁵⁹ Bellocchio, p. 147.

¹⁶⁰ Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 1425.

¹⁶¹ ‘La casa era a Varese, Sacro Monte di Varese, in un posto chiamato S. Ambrogio Olona. Vi andavamo in genere a passare le vacanze, ma durante la guerra è diventato un luogo di questo forzato/beato esilio.’ Raboni in Del Giudice, p. 55.

Dickens, che adoravo e che adoro ancora; ma anche Dostoevskij, anche Tolstoj.¹⁶²

Apart from canonical authors, Raboni's father, through his work for the Department of Education, gave newly published books to Raboni while in Varese, so he was able to read a wide range of Italian writers including Vittorini, Piovene, Bontempelli, Buzzati, Francesco Chiesa. He also enriched his literary background with poetry by Montale and other contemporary Italian poets such as Ungaretti, Quasimodo, and Cardarelli. Towards the end of the war Raboni's daily routine in Varese library was to read books published in the 1920s and 1930s. It was in this library that he also discovered books by Sereni (who would become his mentor and a kind of surrogate father figure)¹⁶³ and other poets such as Luzi and Bettocchi:

Fu così che scovai e potei leggere, a tredici anni, libri destinati a segnare la mia vita come *Realtà vince il sogno* di Bettocchi, le *Poesie* di Sereni nell'edizione Valecchi del '42 e [...] *La barca* di Luzi: libri iniziali tutti, della storia dei loro autori, e certo non paragonabili ai capolavori della loro maturità, ma che mi è tuttora impossibile riaprire senza essere investito dall'impeto di novità e d'ardimento di cui erano portatori.¹⁶⁴

During his school years Raboni also read bilingual editions of the 'La Fenice' series directed by Attilio Bertolucci and started translating poetry from Latin and English (specifically Catullus and T.S. Eliot).¹⁶⁵ Later in his career Raboni was to write several essays on Ezra Pound, attributing the use in his own lyric of 'metafora generale' directly to the American poet¹⁶⁶ and he recognized the crucial role his insight into the Anglo-Saxon tradition of T.S. Eliot and Pound gave to his understanding of the concept of poetry.¹⁶⁷ Raboni began writing poetry at school at the age of ten or even earlier. His first poems - imitations of Montale, D'Annunzio, or Pascoli – no longer survive because he burned them, but at the age of twenty he won a literary award and among the judges were Carlo

¹⁶² Interview *Giovanni Raboni. Il futuro della memoria* (1999) cited in Zucco, 'Cronologia', p.lxxiii.

¹⁶³ 'Vittorio Sereni, mio grande amico, quasi secondo padre [...]' in Del Giudice, p. 58.

¹⁶⁴ G.R., 'Mario Luzi, gioventù del poeta', *Corriere della Sera*, 10 October 2001, p.32.

¹⁶⁵ 'Forse i lavori di traduzione che hanno influito di più sul mio lavoro di poeta sono quelli fatti in gioventù, mai pubblicati e poi distrutti: traduzioni dai poeti latini (soprattutto Catullo) e anglosassoni (soprattutto Eliot)' in 'Giovanni Raboni (ovvero tradurre per amore)', in *Traduzione e poesia nell'Europa del Novecento*, ed. by Anna Dolfi (Rome: Bulzoni, 2004), pp. 625-628 (p. 627).

¹⁶⁶ Raboni's article 'Oggetti e metafore' (1962) in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, pp. 247-253.

¹⁶⁷ '[E]cco nel momento in cui cercavo di capire che cosa volevo dire, che cosa valesse la pena dire in poesia o come lo si poteva dire, Eliot e Pound sono stati assolutamente decisivi.' Raboni in the interview to Massimo Gezzi, 'Credere ancora nella poesia. Incontro con Giovanni Raboni', *Atelieu*, 7 (2003), 29-40, p. 32.

Betocchi and Giuseppe Ungaretti. It was Bettocchi who later, in 1963, ranked Raboni with other Lombard poets such as Sereni, Risi, and Erba, noting that Raboni was the most Milanese among them all: 'è certo che il più milanese di tutti è il più giovane Raboni'.¹⁶⁸

Raboni's poetic discourse, even though rooted in the preceding generation of poets, seemed new because of its conversational tone, because of the mythology of the past that he saw in city neighbourhoods and his use of marginal characters.¹⁶⁹ According to Raboni there are two reasons for this tendency of merging the high register lexis with colloquial vocabulary in his own lyric as well as his translations (of Baudelaire for example).

The first reason is the inspiration he drew not only from Italian poets of the early twentieth century such as D'Annunzio, Pascoli and 'crepuscolari', but also the aforementioned poets T.S. Eliot and Pound. Thus Raboni's works embrace different traditions, not solely Italian.¹⁷⁰ I aim to explore influences from the French tradition, especially important in terms of the poetic tradition of representing the city in both Raboni's own lyrics and his translations of Baudelaire. As discussed in the introduction, other scholars have noted that Raboni inherited the Italian tradition of earlier epochs, analysing the links to Dante¹⁷¹ (possibly enhanced also through Baudelaire)¹⁷² and Manzoni.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ The heading of the current section 1.1 includes also a reference to this article. See Carlo Bettocchi, 'Il più milanese', *Questo e altro*, 4 (1963), 115–17 (p. 117).

¹⁶⁹ Critics considered the theme of prostitutes as characters for lyrical discourse in the urban environment to be rooted in Baudelaire's writings. This can be seen as another reference to Baudelaire in Raboni's poetry. See Valentina Fulginiti, 'Passeggiata nella città proibita: prostituzione, erotismo e trasgressione ne *L'Incendiario* di Aldo Palazzeschi', *Carte Italiane*, 9 (2013), 137–57.

¹⁷⁰ Silvana Tamiozzo Goldman, 'Scrittori contemporanei. Interviste a Sandra Petrignani, Giovanni Raboni, Gianni Celati', in *Leggiarde donne... 'Novella e racconto breve in Italia*, ed. by Francesco Bruni (Venice: Marsilio, 2000), pp. 306–17 (p. 26).

¹⁷¹ Di Franza, 'Suggestioni dantesche nella poesia di Giovanni Raboni'.

¹⁷² The link between Dante and Baudelaire was mentioned also by Albert Thibaudet and Benjamin: 'The poet of Florence lived on in the poet of Paris' (Thibaudet cited in Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p.233). In addition, Merte-Rankin stresses the connection between Benjamin and Dante referring to Baudelaire: 'Benjamin explicitly links Baudelaire to Dante'. See Merte-Rankin, Angela, 'Dante's Inferno and Walter Benjamin's Cities: Consideration of Place, Experience, and Media', in *Metamorphosing Dante: Appropriations, Manipulations, and Rewritings in the Twentieth- and Twenty-First Centuries*, ed. by Manuele Gragnolati, Fabio Camilletti, and Fabian Lampart (Wien; Berlin: Verlag Turia + Kant, 2010), pp. 77–87 (p.81).

However Raboni's poetry is also in dialogue with Italian writers and poets of the twentieth-century from previous 'generations' of Macrí's classification,¹⁷⁴ because there was 'un'aria comune',¹⁷⁵ 'uno spirito comune'.¹⁷⁶ If Sereni's and Luzi's poetry still contained stylistic and grammatical features from the Italian Hermetic poets of the twentieth century, Raboni freed his discourse from traces of the Hermetics.¹⁷⁷ His language and style is rooted more in the Lombard tradition while Sereni remained rooted in the Hermetic tradition.¹⁷⁸

The second reason for using descriptive and rational language at the same time derives from the influence of his university degree. Initially Raboni did not view his love of literature and poetry as a career. This was partly a consequence of the more professional aspirations of his bourgeois upbringing, but also of growing up in Milan, Italy's economic centre that attracted many Italians from other regions seeking to better their lives.

La Lombardia aveva valori etici tutti legati al lavoro, una sorta di sfondo protestante, Milano, la città più protestante d'Italia, diciamo. Qui il mestiere di letterato non era apprezzato socialmente, non era sentito come mestiere particolarmente onorevole. Da ragazzo io sapevo che, per vivere dignitosamente, decorosamente, bisognava fare un lavoro. La poesia era una cosa in più, un lusso, non era un mestiere.¹⁷⁹

Law studies and years working as a lawyer in an industrial company gave him real world experience that would not allow him to write in a lyrical and philosophical style divorced from reality.¹⁸⁰ In fact, alongside Raboni's

¹⁷³ Paolo Maccari, "'Il luogo del supplizio': manzonismo di Raboni", in *Per Giovanni Raboni: atti del convegno di studi, Firenze 20 ottobre 2005*, ed. by Adele Dei (Rome: Bulzoni, 2006), pp. 149–60.

¹⁷⁴ According to Oreste Macrí Raboni belongs to the fifth generation of poets. See Oreste Macrí, *Studi montaliani: la vita della parola* (Florence: Le lettere, 1996); Oreste Macrí and Anna Dolfi, *La vita della parola: studi su Ungaretti e poeti coevi* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1998). However, some critics have expressed doubts about the proposed subdivision. One of the criticism is the lack of inclusion of some poets in his classification, for example, Mario Luzi and Piero Bigongiari who should belong to the third generation. See Mirco Giarrè, 'Da Mario Luzi a Piero Bigongiari', *Il Cartello*, Microcosmi, 27 April 2017 <<https://www.ilcartello.eu/microcosmi/mario-luzi-poeti-italiani/>> [accessed 10 August 2017].

¹⁷⁵ Santagostini, p. 24.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ 'Quindi: poca, pochissima grammatica di Sereni, nella memoria poetica e nella poesia di Raboni'. Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁷⁸ 'La fonte della lingua di Sereni è l'ermetismo (e i suoi dintorni), quella di Raboni lo stilismo lombardo'. Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁷⁹ Del Giudice, p. 56.

¹⁸⁰ 'Da lì mi è venuta questa ricerca della commistione dell'alto e del basso, una poesia ragionativa e descrittiva, in parte anche narrativa, che rifuggisse dall'assoluto lirico'. See Del Giudice, p. 56.

geographical roots, Bettocchi analyses his stylistic features drawing on his legal background: ‘C’è nel fondo della ispirazione e nella sostanza della poesia di Raboni, una sorta di saggezza che a dirla amministrativa serve forse a rammentarci la sua laurea in legge, la sua ben presto incominciata pratica nel lavoro ossessivo della città’.¹⁸¹ He states that Raboni’s poetry reads like a catalogue of facts and judgments. It is not a lyrical and philosophical discourse, but one that derives from professional experience and knowledge. Mengaldo also points out the legal features in two of Raboni’s inserts in prose in his later collection *Cadenza d’inganno* (1975) calling these two texts, ‘Economia della paura’ (1968) and ‘Partendo da Boulevard Berthier’ (1968) ‘verbali prosastici’.¹⁸² Zucco writes about Raboni’s ability to be objective and see the bigger picture - the reason he often acted as a moderator or arbiter in different debates.¹⁸³ Raboni himself (possibly acting as his own literary critic) admitted that his university degree influenced his poetry and left a mark of legal rationality:

Gli studi di giurisprudenza li ho fatti molto volentieri e credo che mi siano anche serviti. Una certa mentalità giuridica forse si capisce da alcuni aspetti della mia scrittura: credo ad esempio che si possa scorgere nelle mie poesie una qualche capacità raziocinante, un senso della legge.¹⁸⁴

When referring to the political situation, corruption and criminals, Raboni underlines the fact that Milan is not a desirable city in which to live. This can be seen, for example, in the poem ‘Ogni tanto succede | d’attraversare Piazza Fontana’ (2002) about the Pinelli case and the massacre on Piazza Fontana analysed in Chapter 3.¹⁸⁵ However, the city itself is not dangerous: ‘A me sembra

¹⁸¹ Bettocchi, p. 116.

¹⁸² *Poeti italiani del Novecento*, ed. by Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo (Cles: Mondadori, 2005), p. xxv.

¹⁸³ Rodolfo Zucco, ‘Introduzione’ in Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, pp. xiii–xv.

¹⁸⁴ Piccini, p.4.

¹⁸⁵ ‘For the Italian state, Piazza Fontana was a turning point.[...] Politicians, secret servicemen, army officials, policemen, journalists, and others all combined to cover up and organize the strategy of tension. The state had plotted against its own citizens, imprisoned innocents, set false trials, and manipulated evidence. This series of events, from Piazza Fontana onward, undermined fatally the faith in the institutions that had been an important part of post-war Italy after the defeat of fascism. This was not just a legitimization crisis, but the end of legitimization altogether. By the 1990s, the truth concerning the dark side of the state was available for all to see, laid bare by documents, documentaries, inquests, confessions, and trials. Yet nobody was listening any more. The link between “justice,” “truth,” and memory had been broken’. See John Foot, ‘The Strategy of Tension and Terrorism. Piazza Fontana and the “Moro Case”’, in *Milan since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2001), pp. 184–203 (p. 194).

che il male | non è mai nelle cose'.¹⁸⁶ On the contrary Milan protects, especially if you are among the audience in darkness inside a cinema, or walking through the streets at dawn or dusk, or just observing other passers-by through a window – typical lyrical situations in Raboni's urban writings.

At the end of his life, Raboni reiterated the importance of the metaphor of the city that enabled him to express himself and even live the urban reality:

Per quanto riguarda l'esperienza della poesia, il lavoro sulla poesia, è stato per me importantissimo il fatto di scoprire la città come metafora: come metafora della vita, come contatto con tutto quello che l'esistenza offre di problematico, di inquietante di esaltante. E sono diventato a quel punto – dopo esser stato, nei primi anni di scrittura poetica, un “ri-raccontatore” di storie già raccontate (in primo luogo la narrazione evangelica) – un poeta di storie urbane, di racconti legati alla città, ai suoi problemi, ai suoi drammi, alle sue inquietudini. È il periodo che probabilmente ha segnato definitivamente la mia personalità di scrittore e poeta.¹⁸⁷

Yet Raboni was attracted to the ambiguity inherent in Milan's urban reality, a reality where he felt protected but which could also be dangerous. He writes about the 'harshness' of Milan and highlights that it is not a city where you can live ('invivibilità').¹⁸⁸ These negative characteristics attract him and even fulfil him with 'love of the contrary'. He would write poems about Milan while away from it, as if it were his beloved: 'Milano è adatta alla poesia proprio per le sue asperità, per la sua invivibilità. [...] Potrei anche vivere in montagna, ma continuerei a scrivere poesie sulla città'.¹⁸⁹ It is interesting to note that, if in the nineteenth century Benjamin points out that the tendency was to 'bring the country into the town',¹⁹⁰ towards the end of the twentieth century Raboni imagined the reversed situation of bringing 'the city into the mountain', as in the quote above. However, the common trend of moving from the centre to the

¹⁸⁶ Raboni, p. 644.

¹⁸⁷ Raboni in his interview *Pantheon. Le ragioni della vita* for RAI Nettuno in January 2004, transcribed by Zucco and cited in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. lxxxviii.

¹⁸⁸ 'Una città come questa | non è per viverci' in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 48.

¹⁸⁹ Paolo Di Stefano, 'Tutti i miei cattivi pensieri', *Corriere della Sera*, 27 February 1994, p. 29.

¹⁹⁰ 'The town-dweller, whose political supremacy over the countryside was frequently expressed in the course of the century, made an attempt to bring the country into the town. In the dioramas, the town was transformed into a landscape, just as it was later in a subtler way for the *flâneurs*'. See Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 162.

peripheries,¹⁹¹ or from the city to the country in search of tranquility, does not attract Raboni. Raboni would still bring a buzzing urban reality to the quiet life in the mountains/countryside. (See analysis of the poem about Corso Buenos Aires in Chapter 2.)

Returning to the links to Manzoni and 1966 when *Le case della Vetra* was published, it is worth mentioning that Baldacci highlights the connection with the theme of the metaphorical plague: ‘La topografia, in Raboni, diventa storia, ragione privata e sociale al tempo stesso: sulla faccia di Milano, sui muri *lebbrosi* o nei quartieri “risanati” egli ritrova il disegno della propria vita, o della vita dei più vecchi’ [my emphasis].¹⁹² Baldacci writes that Raboni’s reality is the city of Milan, additionally indicating the time dimensions of Raboni’s poetic discourse towards the past and specifically towards the Milan of his childhood: ‘La realtà di Raboni è la città, è Milano: o per meglio dire quello che resta della Milano di una volta: nella memoria, nella stratificazione profonda degli anni dell’infanzia’.¹⁹³ It is interesting that Baldacci’s words, written in 1966, could express the main topics of the whole of Raboni’s *oeuvre*: in Chapter 2 through discussion of his poem ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’ (1998) I will illustrate the image of the city rooted in Manzoni’s novel with references to Raboni’s childhood as seen in his late writings.

In fact, Raboni defined the evolution of the image of the city and his own relationship with Milan through the mathematical figure of a ‘sinusoid’:¹⁹⁴ as he oscillated from recollections of his childhood to portraying urban life in its full complicity and later returning again to his memories and youth.

Quando ero molto giovane, il vivere con i morti o con il passato, fantasticando sul passato, era evidentemente una forma di difesa contro il timore della vita, che è naturale in un adolescente. In una fase centrale della vita credo di essermi abbastanza buttato

¹⁹¹ Foot’s research is focused on Milanese hinterland. At the beginning of his book he writes: ‘The city’s periphery began to dominate the historic centre’. See Foot, *Milan since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity*, p.1.

¹⁹² Luigi Baldacci, ‘La realtà di Raboni è la città, è Milano’, *Epoca*, 5 June 1966. The article is available in Raboni’s collection: Luigi Baldacci, ‘La realtà di Raboni è la città, è Milano’, in *Tutte le poesie: 1951-1998*, by Giovanni Raboni, 2nd edn (Milan: Garzanti, 2000), pp. 381–83 (p. 381).

¹⁹³ Baldacci, p. 381.

¹⁹⁴ A mathematical term also used for ‘sine curve’ or ‘sine wave’ that means ‘a curve representing periodic oscillations of constant amplitude as given by a sine function’. See English Oxford Living Dictionaries <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sine_curve> [accessed 16 September 2017]

dentro la vita, di aver cercato di viverla molto al presente. Passata questa fase in cui vivere il più possibile con il presente è quasi una questione di necessità biologica, si ritorna a ripiegare un po' sulla comunione con i morti. Vedo perciò una specie di sinusoide nella mia vita, e questo è anche il mio rapporto con la memoria, che ha un andamento non rettilineo.¹⁹⁵

In 2001 Raboni explained that his perception of Milan changed as it relied more on his memory than an actual description of the city; it was internalised. Raboni highlights that his descriptions and observations of the urban space in his lyric have metamorphosed into feelings and emotions as evoked by memories of the Milan of the past.

Raboni lived in the present but gazed back to the past and memories. Yet sometimes the chronotopos in his writing reflected both present and future, especially in his critical writings and the journalist articles relating to the current situation. A perfect example of such a text can be seen in an article for *Corriere della Sera* by Raboni entitled *Una buona notizia da Milano*.¹⁹⁶ Alongside the thematical content of the text (deterioration of society, bribes and decline of education), this text illustrates Raboni's *impegno* owing to the interplay of his various roles as *critico militante*, as literary critic and as poet of Milan,¹⁹⁷ as well as including references to his professional judicial background.¹⁹⁸ Raboni comments on the reaction of the mayor of Milan to the scandal that arose concerning bribes in the construction sector ('l'arresto dei funzionari comunali coinvolti nell'affaire delle tangenti edilizie'), using French words and precise judicial terms in Italian and Latin:

¹⁹⁵ Del Giudice, p. 58.

¹⁹⁶ Giovanni Raboni, '[Appalti e tangenti:] Una buona notizia da Milano', *Corriere della Sera*, 7 October 1991, pp. 1, 13.

¹⁹⁷ See more about the relationship between the reader and the writer in post-modern Italy in Jennifer Burns, *Fragments of Impegno: Interpretation of Commitment in Contemporary Italian Narrative, 1980-2000* (Leeds: Northern Universities Press, 2001)

¹⁹⁸ Raboni's posthumous poems, the collection *Ultimi versi*, including Raboni's unpublished poems featuring political emphasis, and some poems by Patrizia Valduga, have an interesting editorial story behind them: Einaudi initially accepted and then refused to publish the collection; Garzanti published the collection instead. Thus, at one point in time, Raboni became an author of 'prohibited' poems just like Baudelaire. See Maria Serena Palieri, 'Raboni e il Menzogna: ecco le poesie rifiutate', *L'Unità*, 24 February 2006, pp. 1, 22. See other political views of Raboni through his *impegno* in such articles as: Maria Grazia Gregori, '2004, fuga da una dittatura', *L'Unità*, 7 January 2004, p. 23; Antonella Fiori, 'Formigoni, stop al Piccolo', *L'Unità*, 26 June 1998, p. 6; Furio Colombo, 'Il testamento di Raboni', *L'Unità*, 26 March 2006, pp. 1, 26; Roberto Carollo, 'Raboni: "RC ricotta, non la voto più"', *L'Unità*, 12 April 1997, p. 2.

Che cosa è successo, cosa sta succedendo, infatti, a Milano? Semplicemente questo: che la denuncia – anzi, nemmeno una denuncia nel senso formale del termine, ma una sorta di (*absit iniuria verbis*) circostanziata e accorata ‘esternazione’ – fatta un anno fa da una persona limpidamente qualificata e attendibile, il presidente degli architetti milanesi, ha sortito un esito limpidamente univoco, efficace e sollecito. Una volta tanto, le forze dell’ordine e l’autorità giudiziaria hanno preso sul serio le parole di un cittadino, ne hanno verificato la fondatezza, hanno agito di conseguenza con rapidità e inflessibilità. Se si aggiunge che questo cittadino non è un ‘pentito’, ma un serio e stimato professionista, c’è quasi da non credere ai propri occhi e alle proprie orecchie; sembra di essere anziché nella vita italiana dei nostri giorni, in un film americano dei tempi di Roosevelt.¹⁹⁹

Moreover, Raboni starts the article with a comment about the language and style of the mayor and other politicians in general:

Non che il pensiero espresso da Pillitteri (‘Si tratta di cose che sono già successe e che purtroppo potrebbero ancora succedere’) non avesse – non abbia – una sua cinica sensatezza; ma da parte del maggior responsabile dell’amministrazione cittadina era lecito aspettarsi, nella circostanza, qualche riflessione un po’ meno ovvia, rassegnata e bonaria (o, in alternativa, un dignitoso silenzio, nel quale sarebbe stato possibile leggere qualcosa di diverso e di meglio).

Ma pazienza: che il senso dell’opportunità linguistica non sia precisamente il forte della nostra dirigenza politica, lo sapevamo da un pezzo; né sono tanto ingenuo e tanto snob da pensare che sia questa la più allarmante delle sue caratteristiche. Senza contare che stavolta, per fortuna, oltre e più di un’insoddisfazione di carattere, diciamo così, stilistico, c’è da registrar qualcosa di ben più raro, ossia una soddisfazione di carattere sostanziale.²⁰⁰

Raboni was often pessimistic about the future, but his pessimism was directed more towards people than the city. He felt that only the diverse citizens of Milan, the new Milanese, would be able to transform the city positively in the twenty-first century and inject energy and life into his favourite district. Raboni saw the Milan of the future as a dynamic, cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic city:

La Milano ‘dei milanesi’, che in realtà non è mai esistita, meno che mai potrà essere nel prossimo millennio; ciò che possiamo immaginare e augurarci è una Milano di tutti, una città in cui si parlino tutte le lingue, una grande capitale multiethnica proiettata non solo verso l’Europa, ma verso il mondo intero.²⁰¹

Even while studying Law at university and subsequently working as a legal assistant for his school friend Lampugnani Nigri’s family business, Raboni continued to contribute to Milan’s literary life, writing reviews for journals and meeting people like Elio Vittorini, Giovanni Giudici, Vittorio Sereni, Sergio Antonielli, Carlo Bo, Giulio Bonfanti, Luciano Erba, Bartolo Cattafi, Umberto

¹⁹⁹ Giovanni Raboni, ‘[Appalti e tangenti:] Una buona notizia da Milano’, cit., pp. 1, 13.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p.1

²⁰¹ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Ormai ritrovo Milano solo nella mia memoria’, p. 90.

Eco, and Furio Colombo. In 1955 at the age of twenty-three, while writing his Masters dissertation on the history of Roman law, Raboni wrote the article 'Luoghi comuni del cinema' for *La chimera*.²⁰² In 1964 Raboni abandoned his legal career in favour of work as a literary critic and journalist, so converting his passion and main interest into his profession. Nevertheless, his friendship with Lampugnani Nigri lasted until Raboni's death and Nigri was one of the first to publish Raboni's collection, while also establishing several publishing businesses and always working closely with Raboni. Raboni also had his schoolmate to thank for one of his seminal meetings, for it was while Raboni was in high school that he met Sereni at Nigri's house. Vittorio Sereni, Raboni's mentor, was a literature teacher who gave private tuition to Lampugnani Nigri.²⁰³

After giving up Law Raboni worked in the field of literature until his death, writing articles and reviews but also publishing poems and translations.²⁰⁴ He collaborated with many journals and magazines such as *Aut Aut*, *La città*, *Questo e altro*, *Paragone*, *L'approdo letterario*, *Il Bimestre*, *Quaderni Piacentini*, *Nuovi argomenti*, *Rinascita*, *Avvenire*, *Tuttolibri*, *Il Messaggero*, *L'Europeo*, *L'Espresso*, *L'Unità*, to name a few. He was a film critic for *Avvenire*, a theatre critic at *Corriere della Sera*, a consultant for publishers *Garzanti*, *Mondadori* and *Guanda* and also worked for cultural programmes at RAI. Many of his essays dedicated to literature, prose and poetry are collected in the books *Poesia degli anni Sessanta*, *Poesia italiana contemporanea*, *I bei tempi dei brutti libri*, *La poesia che si fa. Cronaca e storia del Novecento poetico italiano 1959-2004*, *Quaderno in prosa* (1981) and *Contraddetti* (1998).²⁰⁵ All of this activity reveals how prolific in output Raboni was and many colleagues and friends

²⁰² Giovanni Raboni, 'Luoghi comuni sul cinema', *La Chimera*, 2 (1955), 8–9.

²⁰³ Arrigo Lampugnani Nigri, 'Ping-pong in corso Venezia' in Poggi, pp. 17–22.

²⁰⁴ The full bibliography of Raboni's critical and journalistic entries is available on Raboni's official website. The bibliography made by Davide Podavini, and consisting of 156 pages, organises the titles of Raboni's contributions in chronological order. See <http://giovanniraboni.it/Riviste_giornali.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017]

²⁰⁵ Giovanni Raboni, *Poesia degli anni sessanta* (Rome: Riuniti, 1976); Giovanni Raboni, *Poesia italiana contemporanea* (Florence: Sansoni, 1981); Giovanni Raboni, *I bei tempi dei brutti libri* ([Ancona]: Transeuropa, 1988); Giovanni Raboni, *La poesia che si fa: cronaca e storia del Novecento poetico italiano, 1959-2004*, ed. by Andrea Cortellessa (Milan: Garzanti, 2005); Giovanni Raboni, *Quaderno in prosa* (Milan: Lampugnani Nigri, 1981); Giovanni Raboni, *Contraddetti*, ed. by Vanni Scheiwiller (Milan: Libri Scheiwiller, 1998).

considered him a workaholic, highlighting his ‘operosità leggendaria’.²⁰⁶ Eighty-four articles, written by Raboni during his last years for the *Corriere della Sera*, and collected in the book *Giovanni Raboni. Il libro del giorno 1998-2003*,²⁰⁷ illustrate the sheer breadth of his reading. Analysis of these texts reveals that Raboni wrote reviews of authors from different eras, canons, traditions and centuries (Dickens, Homer, Apuleius, Shakespeare, Defoe, Voltaire, Dumas, Hugo, Laforgue, Goethe, Meredith, Thackeray, George Eliot, Fontane, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Schnitzler, Rilke, Proust), but also from different countries worldwide (Hawthorne, Bellow, Singer, Tanizaki, Kawabata) and Italian contemporary writers (Franco Fortini, Luciano Erba, Bartolo Cattafi, Giovanni Giudici, Cesare Garboli, Antonio Porta).

Thus, Raboni played a significant role in the literary and cultural life of the second half of the twentieth century, contributing not only through his own poetic output, but also through his translations from French and English, his work in the theatre as a translator and later as a member of the administrative board for *Il Piccolo*,²⁰⁸ through his work as a journalist, and author of film and theatre reviews, through his collaboration with artists and musicians, and with exhibition catalogues. In a certain way he shaped the literary canon for an Italian and international readership through his reviews dedicated to literature, prose and poetry. Raboni’s *I Cento romanzi italiani del Novecento* (1986)²⁰⁹ published as a supplement for *L’Europeo* aroused some debate and controversy among intellectuals and earned him the sobriquet the ‘king of censorship’, from the title of an article by Mario Fortunato in *L’Espresso* that plays on the Italian words ‘recensore’ and ‘re censore’.²¹⁰ Raboni never pretended to be definitive in his choice of authors to review. On the contrary, he emphasised his own personal preferences by choosing one poet over another, recommending to readers one writer but not another and suggesting for publication (or translation) one book rather than another to publishers. Readers trusted him, appreciating both his

²⁰⁶ Massimo Onofri, ‘Introduzione’, in *Il libro del giorno 1998-2003*, by Giovanni Raboni (Milan: Fondazione Corriere della Sera, 2009), pp. 13–28 (p. 15).

²⁰⁷ Giovanni Raboni, *Il libro del giorno 1998-2003*.

²⁰⁸ See the article about Raboni elected as a new councilman of *Il Piccolo* in Antonella Fiori, ‘Raboni: “La nuova era del Piccolo”’, *L’Unità*, 4 March 1998, pp.1, 7.

²⁰⁹ *I cento romanzi italiani del Novecento*, ed. by Giovanni Raboni (Milan: Rizzoli, 1986).

²¹⁰ Mario Fortunato, ‘Il re censore’, *L’Espresso*, 1 February 1987, 94-97.

broad and encyclopaedic knowledge of literature. Furthermore, he often supported and wrote about new authors specifically to promote new voices. In this way Raboni tried to oppose choices in literature dictated only by the law of economic profit:

Le mie scelte sono scelte di gusto personalissimo. Non a caso, molto spesso, ho usato un criterio comparativo: non mi interessa distruggere questo o quello, quanto valutare confrontando con altri autori e altre opere, magari meno noti e acclamati.²¹¹

1.2. *Questo e altro*: literature and what surrounds it

In this section I develop and examine the ‘altro’ that first shaped Raboni’s background and later reverberated in his poetry. As a critic Raboni worked for the journal *Questo e altro*, launched by Sereni, Niccolò Gallo, Dante Isella, Geno Pampaloni, and also sponsored by Nigri. Raboni wrote that Sereni,²¹² his mentor and older colleague in the field of poetry and literature,²¹³ also invented the journal’s title, which reflects the concept of literature followed by Raboni throughout his career as a poet and translator. Literature, according to the journal’s policy, should reflect real life including both high ideals and lyricisms, but also ‘the other’ that surrounds us in everyday life yet often finds no place in the world of literature.²¹⁴ Raboni tried to reflect the civic reality of the city in literature:

Il titolo ‘Questo e altro’ era, credo, proprio di Vittorio ed era comunque un titolo

²¹¹ Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. cxix.

²¹² Raboni also collaborated with Sereni on some translations. See for example Guillaume Apollinaire, *La chiamavano Lù e altre poesie*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni and Vittorio Sereni (Milan: Mondadori, 1984).

²¹³ For a period of time Raboni and Sereni even lived in the same appartments building: ‘La casa al numero 37 di via Paravia (architetti Umberto Riva and Maria Bottero) meriterebbe certo una targa: vi hanno abitato non uno, ma ben due grandi poeti del nostro Novecento: Sereni (al secondo piano) e Raboni (al settimo)’. See Vivian Lamarque, ‘Tra via Paravia e via Preneste le ombre di Raboni e Pinelli’, *Corriere della Sera*, 6 November 2009, pp. 1, 7.

²¹⁴ Francesca Southerden points out the interdisciplinary policy of the journal *Questo e altro*, ‘which sought to interpret literature in light of the wider political and cultural situation of the time, looking at questions of *impegno* [commitment] as well as the possible relationship that art could entertain with industrial and social practices’. See Francesca Southerden, *Landscapes of Desire in the Poetry of Vittorio Sereni* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See more about the interdisciplinarity in poetry expressed by Gruppo 70 on pages of the journal *Questo e altro* in Giuliana Pieri and Emanuela Patti, ‘Technological Poetry: Interconnections between Impegno, Media, and Gender in Gruppo 70 (1963–1968)’, in *Italian Studies*, 73, 3 (August 2017), 323–37 (pp. 323–330).

straordinariamente sereniano, perché ‘Questo’ voleva indicare la letteratura e ‘l’altro’ voleva indicare tutto ciò che sta intorno alla letteratura – i suoi dintorni più o meno immediati – e da cui la letteratura non può prescindere. [...] A me il binomio posto dal titolo, la non alternativa e la non esclusione che esso implicava continuano a sembrare decisivi: per Sereni, per noi la letteratura era – è – un grande valore che non si esaurisce in se stesso, che non esclude l’importanza dell’altro, della realtà, di tutto ciò che la realtà contiene e propone; e il tentativo di mantenere il binomio è stato centrale per Sereni sia come poeta che come uomo di cultura e centrale per molti di noi nel fare poetico come nell’operare letterario e oserei dire civile.²¹⁵

The interplay across Raboni’s different activities extends also to his poetry and the links to different disciplines or visual arts. The poem ‘Nozze’ (1981), for example, is inspired by two paintings by Jan Van Eyck.²¹⁶ The stanzas written for music – *Stanze per la musica di Adriano Guarnieri* – are another example.²¹⁷ The third example is a collaborative project with the Italian artist Enrico Baj entitled *Sull’acqua* (2003) consisting of thirteen of Raboni’s poems with a common theme of water and rivers and five collages by Baj composed of tubes, wallpaper, shards of mirror and other materials and objects from the domestic hydric system or construction.²¹⁸ Even when engaged in such disparate projects, Raboni always refers to urban settings, geometrical figures or the domestic space. Apart from examples from the visual arts such as paintings, film and music, there is also evidence that Raboni paid much attention to architecture and had direct experience of this field, a fact important to acknowledge when analysing the image of the city in his writings.

The book covers for Raboni’s collections were quite minimalist, often lacking any image and having only the title and the author’s name. However two of his last books, *Tutte le poesie (1951-1998)* published in 2000 and *Barlumi di storia* (2002), when for Raboni the topic of the city was rooted deeply in his poetic

²¹⁵ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Sereni a Milano’ in Dante Isella, *Per Vittorio Sereni: convegno di poeti, Luino 25-26 Maggio 1991* (Milan: All’insegna del pesce d’oro, 1992), pp.41–49 (p.42).

²¹⁶ One of the paintings is ‘The Arnolfini’s Portrait’ (1434) from the National Gallery. Raboni tried to break the timeline explaining that he wanted to use the painting not just as a setting, but to enter into the room represented in the picture by Jan Van Eyck using the poetry: ‘questo quadro mi ha affascinato moltissimo [...] e avevo in mente da molto tempo di ambientarci una poesia; non di farci una poesia sopra, proprio di ambientarci una poesia, cercare di entrare dentro il quadro.’ Raboni in Nicola Merola, ed., *Il poeta e la poesia: poesie e commenti* (Naples: Liguori, 1986), pp. 140–141.

²¹⁷ Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, pp. 965–969.

²¹⁸ Giovanni Raboni and Enrico Baj, *Sull’acqua* (Milan, Belluno, Venice: Galleria Giò Marconi, Colophon, 2003); Marco Corsi, ‘Poeti, artisti, plaque. Quarta parte - Baj e Raboni: un cammino “Sull’acqua”’, *Nuovi Argomenti*, 17 June 2014
<<http://www.nuoviargomenti.net/poesie/poeti-artisti-plaque-quarta-parte-baj-e-raboni-un-cammino-sullacqua/>> [accessed 16 August 2016].

discourse, featured a cityscape image on their covers.²¹⁹ Thus the reader understands, even before direct contact with the poems, that the setting for the poems will be the urban landscape.²²⁰

Raboni's last collection, *Barlumi di storia*,²²¹ has on its cover the picture *Torre* painted at the same time in 2001 by Marco Petrus, renowned for his series of 'portraits' of Milan. The Torre Velasca became one of the symbols of Milan during the period of economic growth. Built in the 1960s, it provoked controversial debate in Italy and across Europe.²²² The philosopher Enzo Paci,²²³ who founded the journal *Aut Aut* in 1951, was also involved in these debates. Since Raboni wrote twenty-four articles for *Aut Aut* between 1958 and 1966, he was undoubtedly aware of and in the centre of these debates.²²⁴

In 1958 when the Torre Velasca was built, Raboni married Bianca Bottero, a student of architecture who later practised as an architect. From then until 1965 the couple regularly travelled, often with Bianca's sister Maria Bottero and her

²¹⁹ Giovanni Raboni, *Barlumi di storia* (Milan: Mondadori, 2002); Giovanni Raboni, *Tutte le poesie (1951-1993)* (Milan: Garzanti, 1997); Giovanni Raboni, *Tutte le poesie: 1951-1998*, 2nd edn. (Milan: Garzanti, 2000).

²²⁰ 'Il nostro rapporto con un libro (ce lo ha spiegato qualche anno fa, con la sua teoria degli *avant-textes*, un grande lettore Gérard Genette) comincia da prima della prima pagina: per esempio dal frontespizio, dalla copertina'. Raboni in Charles Baudelaire, *Opere*, ed. by Giovanni Raboni and Giuseppe Montesano, I Meridiani (Milan: Mondadori, 1996), p. vii.

²²¹ Raboni called this collection 'carte postume': 'Questo libro è nato nell'assoluta convinzione che non avrei fatto altri libri. Ero convinto che il libro precedente, *Quare tristis*, fosse il mio ultimo libro. Poi questi racconti che mi venivano fuori, chiedevano di essere scritti. Una scrittura, un modo, forse vicino alle mie cose più vecchie, con una immediatezza ulteriore. Un libro che mi ha preso di sorpresa, me lo sono trovato fatto con la convinzione che non stessi scrivendo un libro, ma, in qualche modo, delle carte postume. Va bene parlare di gerundio, include la memoria e l'attesa che è future' in 'Giovanni Raboni', *Galatea*, 11 (2002), 46–47 (p. 46).

²²² Vittorio Feltri, 'Inventò la torre Velasca', *Corriere della Sera*, 5 May 1976, p. 7; Vittorio Gregotti, 'Siamo un po' tutti figli della torre Velasca', *Corriere della Sera*, 18 August 1989, p. 3; Franco Manzoni, 'Milano in versi, amata e odiata', *Corriere della Sera*, 19 April 2003, p. 51; Dino Buzzati, 'È morto l'architetto Rogers', *Corriere della Sera*, 9 November 1969, p. 3. See also Halldóra Arnardóttir, 'Architecture and Modernity in Post-War Milan', in *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy*, ed. by Robert Lumley and John Foot (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004), pp. 90–99.

²²³ In addition, Enzo Paci was also Lampugnani Nigri's private tutor, like Vittorio Sereni. See more about the philosophical climate during those years in Fulvio Papi, *Vita e filosofia. La scuola di Milano: Banfi, Cantoni, Paci, Preti* (Milan: Guerini, 1990).

²²⁴ Some examples of the volumes of *Aut Aut* that include essays of both Paci and Raboni. See for example volumes 78 and 86: Enzo Paci, 'Memoria e presenza dei Buddenbrook', *Aut Aut*, 78 (1963), 7–27; Giovanni Raboni, 'Altre conseguenze', *Aut Aut*, 78 (1963), 71–74; Enzo Paci, 'Sulla struttura della scienza', *Aut Aut*, 86 (1965), 27–36; Giovanni Raboni, 'Notizie di poesie', *Aut Aut*, 86 (1965), 61–68.

husband Umberto Riva,²²⁵ both of whom were architects. Raboni's elder brother, Fulvio Raboni, studied architecture and then lectured at the Politecnico di Milano and one of Raboni's children, Lazzaro Raboni,²²⁶ also an architect, designed the renovations to Raboni's last house at 19 Via Melzo.

Raboni's first marriage, the period of his closest connection with architecture and architects was also the period of Italy's boom and the most audacious and courageous projects like Torre Pirelli and Torre Velasca. Both towers, like the Duomo, have become symbols of Milan reflecting the power of the modern city that overcame the war, and they were often captured in films and advertisements in the 1960s and 1970s.²²⁷

The cover of *Barlumi di storia* features only the upper section of the tower that is 106 meters tall and was built in the middle of the Velasca square. The tower symbolises the connection between the present and the past, a revisited idea of the past.²²⁸ The concept of the tower reflects a medieval watchtower with straight lines and a wider upper section. This modern and innovative construction incorporated new technologies and developed the revolutionary (for the time) multi-purpose concept, including as it did parking and leisure facilities as well as residential and commercial space. Raboni appreciated the links between the past and the present. Just as the concept of the medieval watchtower served as inspiration for the design and architecture of Torre Velasca, the sonnet form in literature encouraged Raboni to reveal his feelings and thoughts through the

²²⁵ Umberto Riva is a famous and successful Italian architect and designer, who graduated in architecture in 1959 and started his professional career in 1960. He has a long list of projects and also taught in Palermo, Venice, at The Istituto Europeo di Design in Milan, at the Politecnico di Milano (Polytechnic University of Milan) and at L'École d'architecture de Nancy (School of architecture of Nancy), achieving the title of Academic. In 2003 he received the Gold Medal for Italian architecture.

²²⁶ An interesting fact is that Lazzaro Raboni first graduated in 1986 in Law, like his father, and ten years later in architecture. Like his father, he also did not continue his legal career.

²²⁷ Normally in the 1960s modern skyscrapers were depicted from the ground (the scene, capturing the Terracchione from the film *La vita agra* is remarkable) in order to show their power and impress the small people standing next to them. *La vita agra*, dir. by Carlo Lizzani (Napoleon Film, 1964).

²²⁸ 'The upper third of the building, which protrudes outward from the lower levels, was designed to resemble medieval watchtowers. Such defence towers were used in times of war to protect Italian castles from invasion. By using the Torre Velasca to build upon the ideas of ancient architecture, BBPR was able to connect the modern building to its historic past and keep the design of the new addition from feeling out of place'. See Allison Hyatt, 'AD Classics: Torre Velasca / BBPR', *ArchDaily*, 14 August 2011 <<http://www.archdaily.com/155121/ad-classics-torre-velasca-bbpr/>> [accessed 16 September]

protective skeleton of a solid scheme and one that he played with. Zanzotto's essay, written after Raboni's death, summarises several features of his poetic production, pointing out his main topics and the evolution of his discourse, from free verse towards a traditional sonnet form.²²⁹

Raboni acquired freedom through the constraints of the sonnet form when already a mature poet, author of *Versi guerrieri e amorosi* and especially *Ogni terzo pensiero*. The latter volume earned Raboni the label of the last of the classics, 'l'ultimo dei classici'.²³⁰ However Stella Poli demonstrates that Raboni, even in his early lyrics,²³¹ had already used the sonnet form, maybe not in the traditional two quartets and two tercets format, but just in fourteen-line verses.

Raboni's sonnet however, adopting the closed canonical fourteen-line form divided into four parts, does not adopt the internal scheme of traditional rhyme and rhythm. Raboni's rhythm, rhyme, grammatical structure, *enjambements*, lack of punctuation and particularly the prosody all serve to achieve a maximum level of fluidity. My analysis of the poem 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere' in Chapter 2 illustrates the most striking instance of this combination of all the elements and above all the particular use of the prosody. This poem if not a sonnet, is still written by a mature Raboni adopting more canonical poetic forms.

The connection between Raboni's poetic spaces provides a solid structure for his texts and their 'evidenza progettuale'.²³² Rodolfo Zucco, who prepared and edited the edition for *I Meridiani*, comments on Raboni's manuscripts highlighting the structure of the text on the page: 'È chiara la tendenza di Raboni a produrre stringhe versali della stessa approssimativa lunghezza, che si traduce

²²⁹ Zanzotto.

²³⁰ Franco Cordelli, 'Raboni l'ultimo dei classici', *Corriere della sera*, 10 September 2006, p. 37. The label can be seen as controversial because the wave of neoclassical forms had begun in that time, and many poets such as Pasolini, Zanzotto, Luzi, Valduga wrote sonnets. Beltrami adds to this list Caproni, Betocchi, and Raboni and also points out the increasing interest in the sonnet form in the twentieth century: 'È inoltre da ricordare che il sonetto riconosce riprese significative anche nella poesia del Novecento. [...] Nel secondo Novecento il sonetto (nella più grande varietà di forme, dall'estremo della forma regolare all'altro di forme solo allusive) ho conosciuto un grande sviluppo'. See Pietro Beltrami, *La metrica italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), pp. 282-283. See also Natascia Tonelli, *Aspetto del sonetto contemporaneo* (Pisa: ETS, 2000).

²³¹ Stella Poli, "'Dover toccare qualcosa di fermo". Forme chiuse, responsabilità e sperimentazioni nell'opera poetica di Raboni' (presented at the Textus 2014, Università di Pavia). Magro also mentions Raboni's early poem of fourteen lines entitled 'Arianna' considering it the first sonnet as it was written between 1951 and 1954. See Fabio Magro, 'Poesia in forma di prigioniero. Sul sonetto di Giovanni Raboni', *Studi Novecenteschi*, 34.73 (2007), 209-42.

²³² Zucco in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 30.

nella composizione della figura di un parallelepipedo segmentato orizzontalmente in quattro blocchi'.²³³ Zucco affirms that Raboni paid attention to the aesthetic and geometrical form of the poem on the page. While transcribing a handwritten poem from his notebook, Raboni sometimes had to revisit the poem because it did not coincide with his original image, namely with the idea of the poem:

A volte succede che una poesia mi sembra compiuta e perfetta [...] perché vedo che si presenta sulla pagina attraverso la mia scrittura, attraverso i caratteri della mia scrittura, con una certa disposizione, con una certa compattezza, che è la prova grafica, la controprova grafica di una compattezza interiore e ritmica; poi, magari, la copio al computer [...] e mi accorgo invece che c'è qualcosa che non va, c'è quel verso lì, mi sembra troppo lungo, perché l'avevo accorciato scrivendo, perché volevo che fosse più corto. A volte la verifica della copiatura induce a tornare sul testo, addirittura a intervenire per renderlo più aderente a quello che abbiamo in mente, a quel modello che abbiamo nella testa o chissà dove.²³⁴

The use of numbers in his poems also has a particular significance, which I will examine when analysing how each book is formed. Raboni paid close attention to the architecture of the book itself and the poems and writing within. This thoughtful and mathematically organised structure is similar to the approach used by many other authors, but especially interesting in relation to Raboni's writings are Baudelaire with *Les Fleurs du mal* and Dante with his *Divina Commedia*.²³⁵

Regarding Raboni's prose insertions in the poetry collections, Mengaldo notes that this was a common feature especially in post-war Italian poetry. Raboni, however, uses different types of prose and often his poetic discourse differs from his critical writings or his articles as a journalist. The reader of Raboni the poet frequently must pay close attention because the poet uses syntax in a specific way. 'Economia della paura' (1968) an experimental prose piece, is such an example not just because it reflects spontaneous verbal speech, but also because it represents a transcript from tape. The reader is unable to determine which character is speaking in a text that reads like a screed: the long script of a

²³³ Rodolfo Zucco, "“Quel modello che abbiamo nella testa e chissà dove”. Un appunto per i sonetti", *l'immaginazione*, 289 (2015), 30–31 (p. 31).

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ James S. Patty, 'Baudelaire's Knowledge and Use of Dante', *Studies in Philology*, 53.4 (1956), 599–611; Lino Pertile, 'Baudelaire, Dante e il mito di Ulisse', *Rivista di letterature moderne e comparate*, 36.2 (1983), 109–22.

conversation written in continuous narrative format consisting of short sentences. Another interesting instance, analysed in a later chapter, is the text describing an actual piazza ('In una piazza quadrata')²³⁶ that on the page achieves the shape of a perfect geometrical square. One further example of this thoughtful structure and the mixing of prose and poem is Raboni's 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale' (see chapter 2). Raboni uses almost no commas and charges a short piece of prose that could be easily a poem, with meanings that the reader has to work at to decipher.

Raboni employs a different approach for each of his modes of writing: criticism of literature; criticism of poetry; journalism on cultural and political topics; his prose writings, poems and translations. The dissimilarities can be traced through different elements of the text: punctuation, style, vocabulary, intertextual references,²³⁷ experiments, high register vocabulary and very accessible language. In other words, Raboni the poet does not use the same language as Raboni the literary critic.

Andrea Acribo analyses Raboni's discourse as a critic of poetry and literature and confirms the cross-fertilisation in his work across these two fields. Raboni the critic avoided the heavy specialist jargon that normally applies to Italian academic critics: possibly as a consequence of the fact that he worked neither in academia nor at university, but always had a wider audience through his work for newspapers and journals. Raboni's principle was 'dire molto scrivendo corto'.²³⁸ He wrote clearly without unnecessary decoration or exhibitionism: 'scrive chiaro, non cerca l'originalità, non vivacizza o personalizza il proprio discorso'.²³⁹ His style is sharp, clear and comprehensive as Raboni 'non ama il critichese, non usa paroloni, né wellerismi, e i suoi, pochissimi, forestierismi non hanno niente di esoterico o snobistico'.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 502.

²³⁷ For the theoretical frame about intertextuality see Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Mary Orr, *Claude Simon: The Intertextual Dimension* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French & German Publications, 1993).

²³⁸ Franco Cordelli, 'Raboni. Dire molto scrivendo corto', *Corriere Della Sera*, 25 November 2009, p. 39.

²³⁹ Acribo, 'Un aspetto', p. 14.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

For Raboni the practice and the empirical always prevailed over the theoretical approach: ‘mi considero un traduttore, non un traduttologo’.²⁴¹ Another example, when he compared literary critics with critics who were themselves poets is: ‘Per giudicare bisogna essere a qualche passo di distanza. Forse il critico-scrittore non può fare questo passo di distanza, è troppo coinvolto, forse fa troppo valere la propria urgenza di poetica personale’.²⁴²

Raboni always included the ‘altro’, the *much more*, and tried to combine it with everyday activities and fields so as not to separate poetry from the world. Afribo focuses on Raboni’s style as poetry critic, identifying some features of his critical discourse known as ‘una scrittura mai esibizionistica’.²⁴³

Raboni è un critico estremisticamente passionale e drammatico. La sua critica è una attività della ragione in presenza della passione. Quanto limita e comprime la sfera del sé tanto espande al limite dell’iperbole ciò che pertiene al processo critico in atto e dunque all’oggetto, ovvero ai libri di poesia...²⁴⁴

The same occurs with his work as a translator: he tries to dissolve his own identity through the process of ‘annientamento’, but his passion for this process and his ability as an attentive reader, especially the long term relationship with the source text in the case of Baudelaire, charge his translations with a poetic energy. Raboni tends to use physical imagery in his own poetic discourse, as well as in his critical writings. Therefore, there is the cross-fertilisation between Raboni the poet and Raboni the critic. Furthermore, apart from the use of corporeal metaphors in Raboni’s critical discourse, Afribo admits that Raboni’s style changes when dealing with different poets or writers. When shifting his focus from one author to another, Raboni adopts the style of those authors, whose works he is reviewing: ‘C’è in effetti una quota di mimetismo: su Rebora Raboni è espressionisticamente più spinto che negli interventi su Sereni, ed è più visceralmente e drammaticamente metaforico con l’ipermetaforico Zanzotto’.²⁴⁵ However, Afribo confirms through a series of examples that Raboni’s critical voice is very much his own and does not rely on the context (‘è tutto gratuito e

²⁴¹ Dolfi, ‘Giovanni Raboni (ovvero tradurre per amore)’, p. 265.

²⁴² See Giovanni Raboni, ‘Fra progettualità e giudizio: ambiguità della critica’, in *La critica operativa e l’architettura*, ed. by Luca Monica, pp. 84-87 (p. 87).

²⁴³ Afribo, ‘Un aspetto’, p. 14.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Afribo, ‘Un aspetto’, pp. 14–15.

libero, cioè non contestualmente motivato’).²⁴⁶ Raboni’s style as critic is thus enriched by Raboni the poet and shares many common elements including corporality and even assonances, rhymes and *enjambements*.²⁴⁷

As a newspaper reviewer Raboni faced space constraints yet he never exceeded the permitted word limit:

Il suo talento di recensore, critico, polemista, saggista, non ha mai esorbitato da questi limiti: limiti di misura e di consegna. Sapeva che la rubrica ‘Il libro del giorno’, per la sua rigida collocazione in pagina (sopra la testata ‘Cultura’) non doveva superare le duemila battute e non le superò mai.²⁴⁸

The space allowed for a newspaper article (‘strettissimi confini’)²⁴⁹ has links also with the choice of language, because the spatial limits impose a restricted ‘rhetorical and metric freedom’.²⁵⁰ In addition, the readership of the newspapers or journals for which Raboni wrote was diverse (‘quotidiano, settimanale e rivista non hanno i medesimi lettori, se non per puro caso’).²⁵¹ However, Raboni was able to tailor his style to suit his audience: ‘il suo impegno nei confronti dei lettori è stato, da subito, di assoluta disponibilità, di totale lealtà e non privo della più delicata delle premure’.²⁵²

As a translator, Raboni followed similar rules to those he employed in his journalistic career. For example, when he collaborated with the theatre and translated T.S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral*, he wrote about this experience for the play’s programme when it commenced its run in Palermo on 29 December 2003:

Il problema di fondo era ovviamente quello di restituire con la maggior fedeltà possibile, oltre alla grandiosità del pensiero e alla densità e precisione delle metafore, il peculiare *respiro ritmico* dell’originale – quell’inimitabile *commistione di solennità e di colloquialità*, di slancio lirico e pacatezza razionante, insomma di ‘verticalità’ e

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁴⁷ Afribo gives some striking examples analysing the style and prosody of Raboni’s critical essay about Penna, ‘Trasgressione e mistero nella poesia di Penna’. See Afribo, ‘Un aspetto’; for Raboni’s article about Sandro Penna see Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, pp. 395–405.

²⁴⁸ Paolo Di Stefano, ‘Prefazione’, in *Il libro del giorno 1998-2003*, by Giovanni Raboni (Milan: Fondazione Corriere della Sera, 2009), pp. 9–11 (p. 10).

²⁴⁹ Onofri, p. 17.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Onofri, p. 18.

‘orizzontalità’, della quale quasi tutti i poeti occidentali venuti dopo Eliot – cioè dopo *La terra desolata*, dopo *l’Assassinio*, dopo i *Quartetti* – hanno tentato, poche volte riuscendoci, di essere in qualche modo all’altezza. Ma qui si trattava d’essere all’altezza del modello (del maestro) *non per conto mio*, bensì per conto suo...[my emphasis]²⁵³

This quotation by Raboni explains the four main principles of his critical writings, translations and poetry: the attention he paid to rhythm, musicality and prosody in text; the endless attempts at and continuous research into the perfect combination of two extremes in lyrical vocabulary – the solemn, high register, and the prosaic, colloquial patina - often seen in his other critical writings, but especially in paratext to Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal*; the principle of ‘annientamento’ while translating or simply reviewing other authors;²⁵⁴ and the use of geometrical/ mathematical metaphors, so crucial for the architecture of Raboni’s work and to which I give particular emphasis in this thesis.

Raboni ends his commentary admitting the interchange between his role as a translator/reader and his role as a reader of different authors. Even though he challenges the source text trying to achieve the standard of the master (here, T.S. Eliot), he is still aware that his background and experience of reading another Anglo-Saxon author²⁵⁵ influences his work as a translator: ‘Parecchie volte, lo confesso, sono stato tentato di pensare che l’unica cosa ragionevole da fare fosse appellarmi alla protezione di lui, del beato Thomas, senza stare troppo a distinguere fra Thomas Beckett e Thomas Stearns Eliot; e non è detto che, qualche volta, non l’abbia fatto davvero’.²⁵⁶

²⁵³ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Una traduzione’, *l’immaginazione*, 289 (2015), 12–13 (p. 12).

²⁵⁴ ‘Se è (anche) uno scrittore in proprio, farà bene quando esercita il suo ruolo di recensore, a non ricordarsene troppo. Suo compito precipuo non è quello di emozionare i lettori, bensì quello di esporre loro con chiarezza le caratteristiche dell’oggetto preso in esame e, con altrettanta chiarezza, il pacato e motivato giudizio di valore che ritiene di darne. Deve comunicare, insomma, assai più che esprimere: donde l’opportunità di un linguaggio il più possibile rispettoso della normalità e dunque delle regole, a cominciare da quelle grammaticali e sintattiche.’ See Giovanni Raboni, ‘La recensione. L’arte del dubbio’ in Francesco Cevasco and Demetrio De Stefano, eds., *Come si scrive il Corriere della Sera: dentro il quotidiano tra storia e attualità* (Milan: BUR, 2003), pp.78-82 (p.79).

²⁵⁵ Thomas Beckett, the Irish playwright and poet who lived for a long time in Paris and who was connected to the world of theatre, an important fact here because Raboni was translating a play for the theatre.

²⁵⁶ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Una traduzione’, p. 12.

1.3. City as a text

As I have shown, Raboni was a prolific literature and poetry critic who also commented on his own work: ‘è stato proprio Raboni il migliore lettore di se stesso’.²⁵⁷ Consequently his critical writings and commentaries have provided considerable insight for my analysis in this thesis. Furthermore, Mengaldo states that the understanding of Raboni’s multifaceted poetry requires not just the study of literature, but also of other disciplines:

Il *Comizio* di Fortini e i verbali di Raboni, col loro discorso oggettivistico e documentario, ideologicamente trasparente, intendono [...] marcare dall’interno i *limiti* della poesia, disegnando il perimetro invalicabile che indica ciò che essa *non può* essere, e quanto di una realtà sempre più rugosa richiede altri parametri di resoconto e interpretazione.²⁵⁸

I draw on several scholars in my discussion on Milan and urban life. Firstly, the historian John Foot, whose expertise in the Milan of the second half of the twentieth century has given me a deeper understanding of the transformations that Milan underwent during the period of Raboni’s creative output. Specifically I draw on insight from his book *Milan since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity* and as stated in the introduction, his concept of a fragmented city with ‘ephemeral and complicated representation of boundaries’²⁵⁹ which I illustrate in Chapter 2 when analysing Raboni’s favourite areas of Milan, Porta Venezia and Corso Buenos Aires, that for him represented the whole world. Raboni shows particular interest in this specific area of Milan, enlarging its scale from a small district to the size of a country – an oxymoron because when Raboni claimed to be a citizen of Porta Venezia, a small section of the city comes to represent not just the city, but also an entire country. In addition Foot alludes to the concept of a disjointed city that when applied to Raboni, assumes not just a specific geographical area of Milan, but also the fragmentation constituting those elements of the cityscape common to the urban reality, namely buildings, apartments, staircases, railway stations, cinemas. (See chapter 3)

²⁵⁷ Massimo Onofri in Giovanni Raboni, *Il libro del giorno 1998-2003*, p. 18.

²⁵⁸ Mengaldo, p. xxv.

²⁵⁹ Foot, *Milan since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity*, p. 76.

Following the concept of *Questo e altro*, I draw on inputs from the philosophers Walter Benjamin, Michel De Certeau and Marc Augé who wrote about life in the city. Although all three refer mostly to Paris in their writings, they facilitate a deeper understanding of Raboni's description of Milan. For example, Benjamin investigated the transformation of the city focusing on the interaction between the individual and the crowd and introduced the concept of the *flâneur*. Two key features of Raboni's poetry are the motif of walking through the city, – strolling, movement, walking, – and the observation of everyday life, noticing both the visible – objects, individuals and passers-by, but also the invisible, the hidden histories of places that a *flâneur* sees.²⁶⁰

Benjamin, through his analysis of Baudelaire and as philosopher and observer of urban life, also facilitates a deeper understanding of Raboni's cityscape. His research into the history of urban thought related also to a spatial turn in literature. I refer mostly to Benjamin's essays on Baudelaire and Paris.²⁶¹ 'With Baudelaire, Paris for the first time becomes the subject of lyric poetry'²⁶² and Raboni kept returning to his translation of *Les Fleurs du mal* almost throughout his life. Raboni's close contact with Baudelaire dates from the late 1960s till his death in 2004, and during this almost forty-year period he frequently revised his translation of Baudelaire and published five editions. There are also many instances in his works where Raboni compares Milan with Paris. It seems fruitful, therefore, to bring together Benjamin's studies about Baudelaire's representation of the cityscape and Raboni's own idea of the urban landscape. In addition, Benjamin as well as Raboni, translated works by Baudelaire, however, the *Tableaux Parisiens* not the poetry.

In Benjamin's essay *The Task of the Translator* (1923) written after the translations of Baudelaire, he expressed views similar to Raboni on the subject of

²⁶⁰ Burns also points out the importance of the model of the *flâneur* for individual appropriation of the city (referring to migrants): '[T]he activity of walking through the city is in fact constructive, opening to and developing spaces which have the potential to satisfy the walker's aspirations and thus serving as a spatial realization of individual projections, even if these remain ultimately just projections or visions, rather than concrete buildings or marked-out places'. See Jennifer Burns, *Migrant Imaginaries: Figures in Italian Migration Literature* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), p.134.

²⁶¹ Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*.

²⁶² 'Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century' in Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 170.

translation (when referring to Proust's prose).²⁶³ Both of them saw adopting the same syntax structure for the target text as the best way to re-create the original:

A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not black its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium to shine upon the original all the more fully. This may be achieved, above all, by a *literal rendering of the syntax*, which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator. For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade [my emphasis].²⁶⁴

Although Raboni names mainly two scholars – Auerbach and Thibaudet – who guided him during his long-term project of translating Baudelaire, we can see some similarity with Benjamin's approach. For many professional translators the idea of 'symmetrical' syntax, or in Raboni's case, the rule of not using any punctuation where none exists in the original, would seem absurd.

Another feature of Raboni's translations is the link with movement and walking. Similar to Certeau, who 'reads' the city as a text and finds urban narratives in everyday activities of citizens,²⁶⁵ Raboni also links the text to the process of walking. He explains the act of translation through movement:

Non mi sono mai rassegnato, questo è certo, all'idea di sacrificare o posporre l'esattezza del senso (o dunque, in primo luogo del lessico) all'efficacia del ritmo, o viceversa; intento e tensione sono stati rivolti in ogni istante a coordinare ed equilibrare fra loro le due esigenze così come, *camminando*, si cerca di non perdere mai né *la continuità e regolarità del passo né quella del respiro* [my emphasis].²⁶⁶

Benjamin studies the arcades that represented 'a cross between a street and an *intérieur*'²⁶⁷ and that bear the characteristic trades. The mixed nature of the house and street, noticed by the *flâneur*, who feels at home when strolling, the street becoming like four walls to him: 'The streets become a dwelling for the *flâneur*; he is as much at home among the façades of houses as a citizen is in his four

²⁶³ 'Mi sono imposto come regola assolutamente non trasgredibile quella di non mettere mai un punto fermo dove Proust non l'abbia messo e, in generale, di non cedere mai alla tentazione di proiettare e svolgere sulla superficie ciò che Proust ha costruito e condensato dello spazio' in Giovanni Raboni, 'Tradurre Proust: dalla lettura alla scrittura', in *Proust oggi*, ed. by Luciano De Maria (Milan: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 1990), p. 119.

²⁶⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator. An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 15–25 (p. 21).

²⁶⁵ See especially 'Mythical Texts of the City' in the chapter 'Ghosts in the City' by Michel de Certeau in Certeau and others, pp. 141–143.

²⁶⁶ Giovanni Raboni, 'Una traduzione', p. 12.

²⁶⁷ Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 37; See also Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002).

walls. To him the shiny, enamelled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon'.²⁶⁸

The philosophical approach to life as temporary, a place where we stay for a period of time between our birth and death, has a special significance for Raboni, who sees it as a space (and time) without boundaries.

Ho sempre pensato che la vita non sia qualcosa da cui si entra e si esce, qualcosa che si attraversa come uno spazio finito, ma come qualcosa in cui si sta indefinitamente. Questo non implica, secondo me, per forza di cose, un'idea di trascendenza: semplicemente la vita è questa cosa, la cosa in cui si sta, in cui non si può non continuare a stare anche quando teoricamente la vita finisce.²⁶⁹

When using the two verbs of motion ('si entra', 'si esce'), Raboni denies the existence of a final destination for a person, confirming once again his idea of 'comunione dei vivi e dei morti'.²⁷⁰ The trajectory of a human life in Raboni's works follows a spiral rather than a direct line. For example, in the poem 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere' (see chapter 2) the lyrical character turns and disappears.

Talking about the Paris of the nineteenth century and the Haussmann reconstructions, Benjamin points out that in the transformed city, where technology and market-oriented activities increasingly take place, Parisians 'no longer felt at home' and they became 'conscious of the inhuman character of the great city'.²⁷¹ The city's technical progress, with accompanying menacing mechanical sounds, serves as the background in Raboni's poem 'Compleanno' written on August 24th 1959, the date of his son Lazzaro's birth: 'Dalle gronde | viene un fischio acutissimo, leggero, come | se in un altro quartiere, oltre | l'astruso | cerchio del Vigorelli, nel rombo | dell'aria condizionata | nascesse ancora tuo figlio'.²⁷²

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Raboni in the interview for RAI in 2003 cited in Patrizia Valduga, 'Intervista impossibile con risposte autentiche di Giovanni Raboni', *l'immaginazione*, 289 (2015), 27–30 (p. 28).

²⁷⁰ 'Stanze per la musica di Adriano Guarnieri' in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 966.

²⁷¹ Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 174.

²⁷² Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 55.

Another feature of progress in the city is the mechanisation of our daily routine. Benjamin writes about the progress and inventions that subsequently became a reality and are taken for granted by today's readers, such as the telephone, cameras, traffic and films; and how the perception of time has changed while speed conquered our world. Raboni would like to return to the period described by Benjamin. The most striking example of technological progress and the loneliness of people in a crowded city is in Raboni's poem in prose where two protagonists are presented as machines, and vice versa, the cinema and the reels are presented as humans in 'Piccola passeggiata triomfale' analysed in Chapter 2. Another example, 'Economia della paura',²⁷³ which relates to technology, when the telephone became the setting for Raboni's experimental piece of prose written as if it were the tape recording of a phone conversation. Here, technology is only the background to the deeper and more complicated political situation of 1968.

Raboni was always politically engaged in the city, often feeling disappointed in what he saw around him, as discussed in Section 1.1 dealing with Raboni's reaction to corruption in the construction industry and illustrating his opinion about politicians. I include one more critique about the Lega party and some suggestions for future improvements in order to shape the image of Raboni's Milan. The poet hoped that Milan in the future would welcome different nationalities and cultures, enriching the city's past with new energies:

Sono contrario alla Lega, ma sarei lieto se realizzasse qualcosa di buono per Milano. Da quel che s'intuisce, però, la loro posizione culturale è quella di rinchiudere Milano in una vecchia concezione municipalistica, mentre io la sogno più aperta, più tesa a salvare la sua dimensione umana, rendendo più stabile e civile il miscuglio di mestieri, di livelli sociali, di etnie che trovo nella mia zona. La vecchia immagine di Milano non corrisponde più a niente, la difesa di Milano meneghina è la difesa di un cadavere. Il futuro dovrebbe servire a chiarire che vivere è convivere. Per me, o per i miei figli immagino una Milano con più moschee e senza ghetti.²⁷⁴

Interaction with other people and spatial experience leads to a discovery of the city. The daily routine of going from home to school or commuting to the office – our habitual itinerary - becomes a part of our biography. Our everyday

²⁷³ Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, pp. 99–104.

²⁷⁴ Gianni Mura, 'Milano: parlano i poeti', *La Repubblica*, 9 November 1993, p. 36.

commuting, like a diary, bears our memories and stories. Places we visit and the process of walking create our own narratives, according to Certeau.²⁷⁵

Raboni, using the metaphor of walking through the city, narrates his whole life to us, referring to the places that connect him to particular moments in his life. Often places that no longer exist continue to exist in our consciousness filling it with our memories. Thus, Raboni regrets the loss of the cinema he frequented as a child and which protected him like a maternal womb.

In addition, Certeau as well as Benjamin, refers to urban planning and to city transformation. Certeau notes that urban planners in the twentieth century tried to demolish all the old buildings to make space for new constructions using new materials such as glass (or iron as mentioned by Benjamin).²⁷⁶ Buildings often 'live' longer than humans and as a remnant of history hold their own stories and secrets. The *flâneur* turns into 'unwilling detective' in the city.²⁷⁷

Speaking about Baudelaire as a translator of Poe and his detective stories *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, and *The Purloined Letter*, Benjamin points out that 'with his translations of his models, Baudelaire adopted the genre'.²⁷⁸ Baudelaire wrote three poems about 'the victim and the scene of crime' ('Une Martyre'), the murder ('Le Vin d'assassin'), the masses ('Le Crepuscule du soir').²⁷⁹ Raboni also wrote some 'crime' poems, for example 'Testimoni' (where a duke was killed) or the third poem in prose from 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale', where the author mentions a murder, 'il nome glorioso dell'assassino'.²⁸⁰ (See Chapter 3 and Chapter 2 respectively for analysis of both these poems.)

Certeau calls these elements from the past - the broken houses and collapsing buildings with destroyed facades - 'ghosts in the city', 'old stones'.²⁸¹ They arouse ambiguous feelings. On the one hand, like ghosts from the past they

²⁷⁵ Both Raboni and Certeau compare the city with the theatre: 'A fascinating theatre. It is composed of innumerable gestures that use the lexicon of consumer products in order to give a language to strange and fragmentary pasts. As gestural "idiolects," the practice of inhabitants creates, on the same urban space, a multitude of possible combinations between ancient places (the secrets of which childhoods or which deaths?) and new situations. They turn the city into immense memory where many poetics proliferate.' See Certeau and others, p. 141.

²⁷⁶ Certeau and others, p. 133; Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, pp. 158–159.

²⁷⁷ Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, pp. 40–41.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁸⁰ Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 811.

²⁸¹ Certeau and others, p. 137.

terrify people; the unknown objects from the past that no longer belong to the present reality. On the other hand, however, they evoke pity and nostalgia for something that will soon disappear. Raboni, while trying to evoke memories of his own childhood, belongs to the second group of people who look back to the past with regret. Indeed, Raboni tries to go even further into the past imagining places that existed before his birth, for example reconstructing the history and the actual dimensions of the Lazzaretto:

Tre dei quattro lati del quadrilatero (ciascuno adibito a una diversa funzione: sospetto di malattia, malattia vera e propria, convalescenza, servizi) erano interamente porticati; le stanze per i ricoverati erano 288, tutte con accesso dal portico e finestra verso l'esterno, camino, sfiatatoio, latrina. Il progetto (dovuto forse a Lazzaro Palazzi, che fu comunque sicuramente, dal 1488 al 1508, il direttore dei lavori) si ispirava a nobilissimi modelli, dalle architetture (vere o ideali) del Filarete al tempio centrale di Gerusalemme e al caravanserraglio di Kasan. Era, insomma, un complesso non soltanto vastissimo, ma anche di grande dignità artistica, tale da giustificare l'entusiasmo con cui, nel 1642, l'autore di un libro intitolato 'Theatrum triumphale' lo metteva al terzo posto tra le 'meraviglie di Milano', subito dopo il Duomo e l'Ospedale Maggiore.²⁸²

Raboni studied architectural plans and documents to help him visualise, describe and bring to life the almost demolished Lazzaretto ('cinque camini e sei finestre in tutto').²⁸³ From looking at the plans for the Lazzaretto's construction we can see how detailed and precisely Raboni was able to describe this extinct building. Raboni also reconstructs the history of this place:

Abbiamo comunque, s'intende, anche le misure: trecentosettanta metri per trecentosettantotto, con una superficie di circa centocinquantamila metri quadrati. E abbiamo anche un'idea precisa di com'era fatto, questo gigantesco complesso per la cui realizzazione ci vollero, dal 1488 al 1513, venticinque anni - più o meno come per completare (forse) la nuova sede del Piccolo Teatro. L'unica cosa che non abbiamo più è il complesso in quanto tale, il Lazzaretto in mattoni, pietra e calcina; e la storia del perché non l'abbiamo più è una storia molto milanese, una storia assolutamente tipica e oserei dire attuale anche se è successa più di un secolo fa.²⁸⁴

Certeau considers old houses and buildings to be secret characters that become quotations in the urban scenario, creating intertextuality between the present and the past. They introduce a historical dimension to the urban settings, writing their own narratives. Certeau compares old buildings with ancient gods of place. Apart from the 'legendary places' or the 'phantoms' from the past, Raboni is concerned with people. People's everyday activities add an invisible dimension to the

²⁸² Giovanni Raboni, 'La peste e il suo Lazzaretto', *Liberazione*, 31 August 1996, p. 24.

²⁸³ From the poem 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere' in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1003.

²⁸⁴ Giovanni Raboni, 'La peste e il suo Lazzaretto'.

visible one of the city, shaping its image and becoming the key to its understanding.²⁸⁵ In Raboni's reality (that is at least half a century later than Benjamin's), Benjamin's *flâneur* strolling the arcades and observing, transforms into rushing passers-by more akin to Certeau's citizens. People in Raboni's poems are often too busy to look around them and the modern world with economy-driven activity propels them quickly through the streets that they neither have time, nor desire even to observe.

Certeau often highlights the blindness of people in the city:

These practitioners make use of space that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness.²⁸⁶

Furthermore, Certeau draws a parallel between the act of speaking and the act of walking through the city:

The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered. At the most elementary level, it has a triple 'enunciative' function: it is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of the language); and it implies relations among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic 'contracts' in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation is an 'allocution', 'posits another opposite' the speaker and puts contracts between interlocutors into action). It thus seems possible to give a preliminary definition of walking as a space of enunciation.²⁸⁷

Raboni also connects the act of walking with speaking, with translating and composing poems, often using metaphors from the semantic area related to movement. My purpose is to trace how the process of walking reflects back to his representation of space in his poetic discourse. For example, while discussing the 'rhetoric of walking' Certeau mentions 'turns' proper for both language 'turns of phrase' and for the process of walking.²⁸⁸ Raboni also extensively uses the metaphor of 'turning', as will be apparent from my analysis of the poem 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere', and emphasises this metaphor through a series of techniques in his poetic discourse.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Margherita Lazzati, *Visibili. Invisibili. Reportage* (Milan: Galleria l'affiche, 2015).

²⁸⁶ Certeau, p. 93.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 98.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 100.

Benjamin on the other hand, points out the revolutionary force of Baudelaire's language that is urban dependant language,²⁸⁹ where Baudelaire guides the reader through the phonetics of his discourse with the sound of the city and with the lexis proper to the urban reality:

The *Fleurs du mal* is the first book that used in poetry not only words of ordinary provenance but words of urban origin as well. Yet Baudelaire by no means avoided locutions, which, free from poetic patina, strike one with the brilliance of their coinage. [...] This is the nature of lyric vocabulary in which an allegory appears suddenly and without prior preparation. [...] His technique is the technique of the *putsch*.²⁹⁰

Raboni combined different registers in his poetic discourse while describing Milan. In addition, being 'milanodipendente',²⁹¹ he admitted that by using the form of a verse as a protection or shield he was able to express himself and to release his poetic discourse, which the 'sonorous phantom' dictated to him.²⁹² Thus Raboni also hides behind verse, the sonnet form for example.

Raboni uses the concept of movement, not only in his own poetry and in translation as mentioned above, but also in the process of reading poems. A good illustration of Raboni, who taught us how to read the poems, is given in the preface to Cattafi's poems. When he read his poems, Raboni suggested that we apply the same principle of reading poetry as Bartolo Cattafi: namely not to consider individual poems, but to consider the total body of poems as a unique creative *oeuvre*. Raboni mentions this same approach when referring to all five editions of his translations of Baudelaire. Therefore, in chapter 4 I will look at the evolution of Raboni's renderings related to cityscape. Raboni also always

²⁸⁹ 'His prosody is comparable to the map of a big city in which it is possible to move about inconspicuously, shielded by blocks of houses, gateways, courtyards. On this map the places for the words are clearly indicated, as the places are indicated for conspirators before the outbreak of the revolt. Baudelaire conspires with language itself. He calculates its effects step by step.'

Baudelaire 'avoided revealing himself to the reader' in Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 98.

²⁹⁰ Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 100.

²⁹¹ Ugo Ronfani, 'Una poesia Milanodipendente ma universale', *Il Giorno*, 8 June 1997, p. 20.

²⁹² 'A volte è un'immagine che si insegue, a volte è un suono, *un fantasma sonoro*: a me capita di avere in mente un ritmo e ancora di non riuscire ad accordargli delle parole. Comunque nasce proprio da un'elaborazione mentale. Quando mi metto a scrivere una poesia, l'ho già praticamente scritta dentro la testa: poi naturalmente viene il lavoro artigianale. Una volta che esiste una traccia che è, ripeto, non praticamente confezionata, una traccia che viene da dentro, allora si comincia il lavoro di limatura, di aggiustamento: si trovano dei legami, si trovano delle associazioni di suoni, di ritmi, dei perfezionamenti che all'inizio si sono soltanto intuiti o sperati. Però, ripeto, mi riesce totalmente estranea l'idea di una poesia che nasca come 'oggetto di laboratorio': la poesia è qualcosa che si impone a noi, non qualcosa che noi imponiamo a noi stessi o alla realtà [my emphasis]'. See Giovanni Raboni, 'Autoritratto 2003', in *Tutte le poesie (1949-2004)*, by Giovanni Raboni, ed. by Rodolfo Zucco, 2 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 2014), II, v – xx (p. xii).

revisited his own poetry: for example, in the collection *A tanto caro sangue* (1988) he re-published all his poems written between 1953 and 1987, but with revisions.²⁹³

Raboni's introduction to Cattafi's selected poems illustrates also how he guides the reader (here in his critical writing, though this refers to all his work).

The introduction consists of five sections (1, 2, 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 4, 5) – even as literary critic Raboni continues to create a distinct structure for his critical discourse. He italicises key words guiding the reader through the text. Raboni in describing Cattafi's poems uses many words relating to journey, circle structure, movement in both directions – forwards and backwards, 'le metafore di viaggio', 'fluidità':

A chi intenda esplorare nella sua interezza l'opera poetica di Bartolo Cattafi (e, così, anche a chi ci si accinga a leggere questo libro che vuole offrirne una ricapitolazione il più possibile vasta e fedele) consiglieri come primissima scelta quella di non scegliere affatto, di abbandonarsi *al flusso* dell'indistinto e al fascino dell' indistinguibile: come se le mille e più poesie che compongono quest'opera, e le quasi quattrocento poesie che compongono questo libro, fossero in realtà *un'unica poesia, un unico grande specchio* nel quale gli infiniti dettagli dell'esistenza e *della pronuncia* si riflettono tutti insieme e uno per uno in una contemporaneità al tempo stesso nitida e vertiginosa [my emphasis].²⁹⁴

In section 3c, ironically Raboni reflects on Cattafi's personal life between January 1963 and February 1971 when for eight years he was silent as a poet, drawing a distinction between Cattafi the man and Cattafi the poet. In fact, Raboni also had a similar life, engaged as he was in multiple activities; thus this distinction applies to him as well. We see the irony that often marks Raboni's writings:

Chi non conosce Cattafi (voglio dire l'uomo Cattafi) può credere che si tratti di un'esagerazione o di un modo di dire. Non è così. Posso assicurare che, in quegli anni, Cattafi ha fatto di tutto – ha viaggiato, pagato debiti, offerto pranzi; si è costruito una casa; ha dipinto dei quadri, alcuni dei quali decisamente belli; si è persino sposato – tranne che scrivere poesie.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Raboni did not like to keep his notes, but one of his notebooks containing his revision of the poems for *Ogni terzo pensiero* is still available. See D'Ambrosio, Stefano, 'Un taccuino inedito di Giovanni Raboni', *Studi Novecenteschi*, 37.80 (2010), 413-457.

²⁹⁴ Bartolo Cattafi, *Poesie scelte (1946-1973)*, ed. by Giovanni Raboni (Milan: Mondadori Editore, 1978), p. 15.

²⁹⁵ Cattafi, p. 20.

Raboni guides the reader, but also expects a lot from him in return. Being modest, and at the same time borrowing the number twenty-five from Manzoni, Raboni considers that he only has a limited circle of readers, to be precise – ‘venticinque lettori’.²⁹⁶ In the introduction mentioned above Raboni always keeps his reader in mind and writes: ‘All’inizio di questa nota – *qualche paziente lettore forse lo ricorderà* – ho parlato di “variare delle luci” e di “diverso fluire del sangue nelle diverse età dell’uomo” come dei motivi e, al tempo stesso, dei modi specifici d’un non appariscente ma inesorabile “evolversi” della poesia cattaiana [emphasis mine]’.²⁹⁷ This approach differs, for example, from that used by Baudelaire who identifies his reader as ‘the least rewarding type of audience’²⁹⁸ in the introductory poem to *Les Fleurs du mal*.

Raboni draws striking parallels between poetry and movement, including elements of urban scenario and architecture and emphasising the connection between our experience as a reader and the journey:

Alla fine di questo (rapido, per forza di cose, e schematico) tentativo di esplorazione e rilievo del paesaggio Cattaia dovremmo forse chiederci, per stare alle regole, che cosa ci aspetta ‘dietro l’angolo’, al di là dell’ultima battuta del libro. Ma siamo poi sicuri che questo al di là sia davvero qualcosa che deve venire dal futuro, che appartiene al futuro e non, invece, al sempre mutevole equilibrio tra passato e presente, alla circolarità di scrittura e lettura, all’infinito combinarsi delle tensioni tipiche che ho cercato di individuare e di tutte le altre che ogni lettore potrà scoprire e magari, al limite, inventare per conto suo? Meglio, allora, tornare al mio consiglio di partenza (non scegliere affatto, abbandonarsi al flusso dell’indistinto e al fascino dell’indistinguibile) e modificarlo e completarlo così: il senso di attraversamento della poesia di Cattaia adottato in questa nota non è che uno dei tanti possibili, e non necessariamente il più giusto e il più utile; l’uso migliore che si possa fare di questo libro è quello che si farebbe di un libro le cui pagine fossero staccate l’una dall’altra e non portassero alcun numero.²⁹⁹

When describing Cattaia’s work and poetry, Raboni uses the concept of movement and a circular journey while reflecting on the role of the reader and possible readings. He carefully guides the reader, without suggesting only one possible reading, highlighting the individual experience of reading and multiple

²⁹⁶ ‘I temi dell’ingiustizia, della persecuzione, del processo iniquo, dell’innocenza ingiustamente perseguitata e punita; l’immagine, esplicita o implicita, della città come teatro della peste, come contenitore di ogni possibile contagio fisico e morale; il gusto di nominare luoghi, circostanze e documenti con scrupolosità impassibile e segreta passione; l’attenuazione, la reticenza e l’ironia usate per rendere pronunciabili l’indignazione, lo sgomento e la pietà: tutte queste cose, che *i più pazienti fra i miei venticinque lettori* potranno forse trovare nei miei versi [...] vengono, non ho dubbi, da Manzoni, sono le prove, le stimate della mia passione manzoniana, della mia manzonità [my emphasis]’ in Raboni and Manzoni, p. 19.

²⁹⁷ Cattaia, p. 24.

²⁹⁸ ‘Some Motifs in Baudelaire’ in Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, pp.107-154 (p. 109).

²⁹⁹ Cattaia, p. 25.

possible interpretations. The theme of movement used in relation to Cattafi is connected to Raboni's own experience as a poet and his poems 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere' and 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale', analysed in chapter 2.

This chapter began by reviewing Raboni's biographical and professional connection to Milan, rooted in the Lombard tradition. In relation to the spatial representation I highlighted Raboni's interest in architecture, discussing also the scientific approach and mathematically thoughtful structure he uses while building text. In addition I drew attention the way his legal background impacted on the rational manner of his thinking and coloured stylistically his poetic 'dynamic' discourse, often expressed through movement or through the metaphor of journey. Finally, I reasoned why the approach of Benjamin and Certeau better fits with analysis of the cityscape in Raboni's writings.

Chapter 2 will identify, through an examination of Raboni's rich background and multi-dimensional transnational experience, those elements of the representation of the city in his poetry that embraced not only traditional lyrical elements, but also the practical elements of our lives. Bettocchi, at the beginning of Raboni's career as a poet, predicted that the evolution of Raboni's work would be always less poetic and would belong increasingly to the 'something other'.³⁰⁰ Through the close reading of his poems I aim to identify 'quell'altra cosa',³⁰¹ as well as Raboni's *questo* within *altro*.

³⁰⁰ Bettocchi, p. 117.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

Chapter 2. Fragmented city: Porta Venezia and Corso Buenos Aires

‘Sono un poeta non solo Milanese, ma di Porta Venezia’

*(Raboni)*³⁰²

This chapter focuses on Raboni’s favourite area of Milan, through which the author takes us on a journey. First, I analyse two articles published by Raboni in two different guides: ‘Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita’³⁰³ and ‘Venezia, Buenos Aires. Imprevedibile bazar’.³⁰⁴ Although both articles depict the district of Porta Venezia, each offers a slightly different perspective. ‘Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita’ focuses more on the area and its historical background, mingled with Raboni’s personal memories, while ‘Venezia, Buenos Aires. Imprevedibile bazar’ is a canticle to Corso Buenos Aires that describes the present yet looks to the future.

Having established the context and essential information for understanding the hidden levels of Raboni’s poetic discourse, I turn then to his poetry, mentioned by the poet himself at the end of ‘Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita’, namely *poèmes en prose* ‘Piccola passeggiata trionfale’ and ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’.³⁰⁵ These two works take the reader on a journey through Porta Venezia and are thus linked thematically, but also in form and style. Raboni justified the insertion of prose pieces in his collection of verse to illustrate his desire to extend the borders of his narration. He further draws a parallel between their functional charge and style, acknowledging the fact that hendecasyllable verse, in his case, is similar to the narrative as much as the

³⁰² Giovanni Raboni, ‘Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita’, in *La città narrata, le vie, le piazze ed i quartieri di Milano raccontati dai suoi poeti, artisti, giornalisti ed intellettuali*, ed. by Angelo Gaccione, (Milan: Vienneperre, 2002), pp. 271–76 (p. 276).

³⁰³ See the epigraph and note 287.

³⁰⁴ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Venezia, Buenos Aires. Imprevedibile Bazar’ in Maria Teresa Wurer and Maria Francesca Castelbarco Albani, eds., *Come ottenere il meglio da Milano: angoli, persone, mode, indirizzi*, supplement for *Il Piacere*, n. 4, (Milan: Rusconi, 1986), pp. 161–64.

³⁰⁵ ‘Comunque soprattutto nelle ultime raccolte c’è una serie di prose liriche che si intitola ‘Piccola passeggiata trionfale’: ebbene è proprio un itinerario in queste strade. Anche l’ultima poesia di *Quare Tristis*, che è una specie di monologo, è ambientata qui’. See Giovanni Raboni, ‘Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita’, p. 276.

poèmes en prose genre: ‘Ogni tanto sento il bisogno di introdurre questi momenti di distensione della scrittura e di un racconto un po’ più esplicito. Nel nuovo libro [*Quare tristis*] non ci sono parti in prosa, però ci sono endecasillabi sciolti che fanno un po’ quella stessa funzione’.³⁰⁶

My close reading of ‘Piccola passeggiata trionfale’ and ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’ consists of a detailed analysis of both spatio-temporality and the prosody and illustrates the intercorrelation of ‘meaning and the sound’.³⁰⁷ See also Appendix 2A for spatio-temporality. Furthermore, Appendix 2B includes the full text of the poem ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’ with the prosodic analysis. The resulting analysis reveals that the similarity of both poems lies not only in Raboni’s thematic choice,³⁰⁸ but also in his stylistic approach and phonetic, which reflect the same concept of movement, fluidity, and lack of borders.

2.1. Raboni’s articles about Porta Venezia and Corso Buenos Aires

Raboni expands the boundaries of his favourite district to the size of a country, creating a special microcosm and so defines himself as ‘un cittadino milanese’,³⁰⁹ but especially as ‘un cittadino di Porta Venezia’.³¹⁰ Raboni explains the advantages of being ‘a citizen of Porta Venezia’:

Ho il grande vantaggio di essere a due passi dal centro senza essere proprio in centro: è il precentro. Io arrivo a piazza San Babila a piedi. Ci sono ritornato all’incirca nell’83-84, quasi una ventina di anni fa; ci sono tornato

³⁰⁶ Tamiozzo Goldman, ‘Scrittori contemporanei. Interviste a Sandra Pettrignani, Giovanni Raboni, Gianni Celati’, p. 315.

³⁰⁷ ‘The classical situation in poetry is the combination of fullness of sound with the fullness of meaning, i.e., a direct proportionality between these two values. It is necessary to begin with this classic situation in order to understand the constructive significance of sound. It is necessary to show how meaning and sound combine in the constructive unity of the artistic whole’. See Medvedev and Bakhtin, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, p. 99.

³⁰⁸ Tomashevsky describes thematic development in verse and points out the power of verse vocabulary. ‘The special arrangements of the words in parallel rows determines their meaning as much as does the syntax; they are part of the verse line at the same time as they are part of the sentence and sentential association are frequently subordinate to their verse associations, that is, the connections arising from a word combination with another word in the verse line and from its position in the rhythmic sequence of the line. || Verse language is a language of close semantic associations. The logical segmentation of it is much more detailed and uniform than in prose (i.e. almost every word may be distinct)’. See Tomashevsky, ‘Lyric Poetry’, in Lawrence Michael O’Toole and Ann Shukman, eds., *Formalism: History, Comparison, Genre, Russian Poetics in Translation* (Oxford: University of Essex Press, 1978), pp. 74-77 (p.74).

³⁰⁹ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita’, p. 271.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

definitivamente e non ho intenzione di lasciarla più. Questa è la mia Milano di nascita e poi di elezione. Naturalmente ho molti ricordi e molte ragioni d'affetto anche in altre zone, però il centro per me è questo, la mappa è questa. Quando mi sono spostato da questa zona mi sentivo un po' all'estero.³¹¹

In 1932, when Raboni was born, this area was new: Milan's boundary then ended at Porta Venezia when the railway station was under construction. Now the railway station sits at the end of Corso Buenos Aires, on the other side of the zone of Porta Venezia. Later the area, where the station was formerly located, was transformed into a new residential district. Yet it preserved the memory of its past and the theme of the station and railway workers is present in Raboni's work ('il circolo del dopolavoro ferrovieri').³¹²

Raboni breaks down Porta Venezia into even smaller areas, emphasising several topographical places of importance to him, such as Via San Gregorio (for example, in 'Come cieco, con ansia...'): the street at number 53, where Raboni was born and spent his adolescence. Here a young Raboni would spend his time looking out of the window with feelings of alienation, being an observer, not a participant in events, and thinking of composing poetry. (See section 3.1.)

While most of Raboni's childhood and adolescence were spent in Via San Gregorio, a short but very formative and important break occurred when, after the first bombings of Milan during World War II, his family moved to Sant'Ambrogio to live in their summer house in Varese, his 'forzato/beato esilio',³¹³ as discussed in Chapter 1. Raboni was 13 when the war ended and the family moved back to Milan to Via San Gregorio. He rediscovered Via San Gregorio and its environs as well as the city at large; fascinated by the energy and dynamism it now embraced to overcome the depravations of the war:

Dal 1945 in poi, io ero un ragazzino, l'ho vissuta con entusiasmo di chi la riscopre, ero sfollato con la famiglia nella casa di campagna fra Varese e il Sacro Monte, e mi sono innamorato della città, un vero 'coup de foudre'. In campagna leggevo grandi romanzi, così mi ero innamorato dell'idea di città. Andavo ai giardini pubblici in una città distrutta, ma piena di voglia di ricominciare, con un'impronta forte sino al '68, poi si è ingarbugliata.³¹⁴

³¹¹ Ibid., p. 276.

³¹² 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale' in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 811.

³¹³ Piero Del Giudice, 'Giovanni Raboni poeta nella città di Milano', *Galatea*, November 1997, 54–59 (p. 55).

³¹⁴ Minervino, p. 3.

Raboni attended primary school in this area, in Via Casati, but he confesses to having an extremely irregular scholastic career, having been expelled from one private school, ‘Gonzaga’, then going to ‘Parini’, and having to re-sit many exams, as well as take private lessons. In fact Raboni did not like school, preferring to stay at home reading what he chose.³¹⁵

Raboni first moved out of Via San Gregorio in 1956, when he married and ‘emigrated’ to the historical city centre (‘sono “emigrato” nel centro storico’)³¹⁶ where he lived for a long time. However, he would later return to his ‘homeland’ (‘tornare nei miei luoghi originari’)³¹⁷ in the Porta Venezia district, living first in Via Castaldi, and then crossing the avenue (il corso Buenos Aires) to live in Via Melzo. This journey, from one side of the avenue to the other, is described in the poem in prose ‘Piccola passeggiata trionfale’, part of *Ogni terzo pensiero* (1993), analysed later in this Chapter (2.2)

Raboni also highlights the cultural background of the area, and in particular of Via San Gregorio, where the publishing house of *Questo e altro* was located: Raboni was one of the initiators of, and worked for, this journal along with Vittorio Sereni, Dante Isella, Geno Pampaloni and Niccolò Galli. Vittorio Sereni lived in Via Scarlati, also in this zone, as well as other famous writers and intellectuals such as Clemente Rebora (Via Tadino) and Giovanni Giudici (Via Tadino). Other journals (*Il Diario*, *Il Saggiatore*), the publishing house *Tropea* and art galleries also brought life to this area: ‘È una zona in crescita, sicuramente non è una zona morta’.³¹⁸

Furthermore, the area has connections with Alessandro Manzoni and his novel, since the Lazzaretto was nearby. The fact of his birth near the Lazzaretto was extremely important for Raboni and inspired him throughout his life, resulting in rich intertextual discourse and the book *Raboni Manzoni*, his homage to

³¹⁵ When an adult, the poet similarly emphasizes his inability to have a traditional daily routine and to work with other people: ‘Ho sempre resistito poco negli uffici, nei lavori fissi’ in Raboni, ‘Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita’, p. 273.

³¹⁶ Raboni, ‘Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita’, p. 271.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid., p. 276.

Manzoni.³¹⁹ The Lazzaretto was demolished several years before Raboni's birth, although Raboni was able to re-create and visualise it, as mentioned in Section 1.3. According to Raboni, after the Lazzaretto's demolition in the 1920s, the first wave of construction had just begun to transform the historical heritage into a residential area. Stating that it was the beginning of an underlying corruption in real estate and construction, Raboni may be referring to Berlusconi and his projects Milano 2 & 3, and to corruption in modern Italy.³²⁰ Raboni focuses on a better era for this area and especially the Lazzaretto, emphasising memories and particularly his knowledge of its historical background. He mixes time layers, looking into the past and into the history of the Lazzaretto:

Qui c'era il 'Lazzaretto', prima che io nascessi, ma molto tempo prima... la demolizione del 'Lazzaretto' è se non ricordo male, degli anni Venti, è la prima speculazione edilizia di grandi dimensioni a Milano. Una Banca ha comprato il 'Lazzaretto', l'hanno demolito ed è sorto un intero quartiere. Però sì, è mentale la cosa, perché del 'Lazzaretto' sono rimasti in piedi venti metri di mura credo; verso la fine di via San Gregorio, c'è la chiesa di San Carlino che era la chiesa centrale del 'Lazzaretto'. Le uniche vestigia che sono rimaste sono queste. Però si respira un'aria di peste, diciamo così, e questo è per me inquietante e suggestivo.³²¹

Apart from its biographical significance, Porta Venezia also attracts Raboni because it has survived the war well preserved and is multicultural. This preservation surprises Raboni, because of Porta Venezia's location next to the station, normally a target for bombing raids during the war. Secondly, the Porta Venezia district is host to many migrants and languages resulting in a mix of different cultures: 'crogiolo di razze e lingue diverse'.³²² The migrants, initially settling in other parts of the city, would later also come to Corso Buenos Aires and it was this melting pot of cultures that attracted Raboni.

For Raboni one of the greatest advantages of Milan is its twenty-four hour lifestyle ('[la zona] molto frequentata in tutte le ore').³²³ However, this appears to contradict his reclusive nature. When speaking of his childhood he recalls his

³¹⁹ Raboni and Manzoni.

³²⁰ Milan in the period of its 'second transformation' in the 1980s, after the economic miracle, and 'with the judicial scandals of bribesville (Tangentopoli)' became the capital of crime in Italy. See Giuliana Pieri, *Milano nera: Representing and Imagining Milan in Italian Noir and Crime Fiction*, in *Italian Crime Fiction*, ed. by Giuliana Pieri (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), pp.132–150 (p.132).

³²¹ Giovanni Raboni, 'Corso Buenos Aires: multiethnico e pieno di vita', pp. 273–274.

³²² Ibid, p. 272.

³²³ Ibid, p. 272.

isolation, being on the other side of the window and not playing with other children. In addition, he did not attend school regularly and although, after university, he worked as a lawyer for a big company 'Lampugnani Nigri', he found it difficult to adjust to a daily routine of work and left the company after several years.

In 1963 in Vajont, when one of the highest dams in the world, the result of industrialisation, flooded wiping out several villages,³²⁴ Raboni left his job at a company which had two factories in the damaged area, recognising that he was unable to defend the company's interests, feeling as he did, more sympathetic towards the workers than the bosses and politicians who, through disregarding warnings, contributed to a tragedy that caused the death of almost two thousand people.³²⁵ Since the dam was state-owned, politicians and journalists tried to cover up the real cause of the flooding, blaming it on an unavoidable and unexpected natural event and act of God.

This sympathy towards the working class is similar to Raboni's feelings for the multicultural population of Porta Venezia. When describing his favourite district and 'his' Corso, Raboni states that Corso Buenos Aires attracts him because it is never deserted. He compares the Corso to the historical centre of the city. In the old city centre, in Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, there are banks, life, and business activity during the day, but it is empty, inanimate, even frightening at night. By contrast, Corso Buenos Aires is full of people, traffic, and cars at all times of the day and night; there is always at least one pharmacy open at night, plus restaurants, and three newspaper kiosks. Thus we see that the 'paradox' of the avenue, the night scene with its varied population, is seen as safer than the luxurious, affluent and economic area. Even if this area is less well organised and has some problems with public order owing to its migrants, Raboni believes this

³²⁴ See Christopher R.J. Kilburn and David N. Petley, 'Forecasting Giant, Catastrophic Slope Collapse: Lessons from Vajont, Northern Italy', *Geomorphology*, 54 (2003), 21–32; Marco Paolini and Gabriele Vacis, *Il racconto del Vajont*, rev. edn. (Milan: Garzanti, 2013).

³²⁵ See Raboni in Del Giudice, p. 56: 'Allora ero veramente giovane; andavo in fabbrica, vedevo gli operai, come amministratore delegato partecipavo ad esempio alle trattative con i sindacati, mentivo per mantenere, per contenere le richieste dei sindacati, dei lavoratori. Questo tipo di finzione non la sopportavo. Ero sempre dalla parte degli operai che mi sembrava chiedessero quello che dovevano chiedere, anche meno di quello che dovevano chiedere. Mi trovavo nella situazione di doverglielo negare, di dover tentare di negarglielo'. And then Raboni continues speaking about the tragedy on Vajont dam: 'Per questo avvenimento tragico, e poi per come ho visto svilupparsi la ricostruzione e tutto l'intreccio di corruzione e di imbroglio che una cosa di questo genere comporta. Mi sono sentito incompatibile insomma. Ero diventato sì avvocato, ma insieme uomo dell'industria e del capitale'.

brings life to the area, making it even ‘rassicurante’.³²⁶ He enjoys the fast turnover of shops, contrasting with the well preserved buildings, which gives a sense of circulation and movement, the central theme in both ‘Piccola passeggiata trionfale’ and ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’ (see Sections 2.2 and 2.3).

Raboni describes Milan as ‘vivibile’ in negative form in his early poem ‘Questa città non è per viverci’, later included in *Raboni Manzoni*. Furthermore, in an interview of 1993, he writes that everything that could make Milan ‘invivibile’ has already been done in the previous decades.³²⁷ He again compares Porta Venezia to the old city centre where no one lives and which is like an empty egg shell: ‘Il centro è disabitato, è un guscio vuoto’.³²⁸

Raboni writes also about the architectonical features of this area and its public spaces, specifically the library in Via Frisi, la Biblioteca Pubblica Rionale Venezia. As shops changed hands along Corso Buenos Aires, the library during its history was an emergency assembly point, a garage, and even a place for drug dealing. At the beginning of the twentieth century one of the first cinemas occupied the library, during the period of the brothers Lumière and finally it escaped demolition and was even renovated. So the story was similar to that of the Lazzaretto, but with a better ending.

At the end of his life Raboni lived opposite this library, in Via Melzo 19, and when describing the library’s location, he states that he prefers to be an observer, repeating the symbol of the window: ‘Dove abito io, per esempio ci sono delle case molto belle; l’angolo di via Malpighi è uno dei centri del liberty milanese. Io non abito in via Malpighi, ma guardo su via Malpighi; in un certo senso è anche meglio che abitarci, perché ce l’ho lì davanti’.³²⁹

The article mentions other public places, like the zoo, public gardens and the cinema. While the gardens in general have deteriorated (‘l’aria più spellacchiata’),³³⁰ he sees this as a decent place for a cinema and draws a parallel

³²⁶ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita’, p. 272.

³²⁷ Raboni in Mura, ‘Milano: parlano i poeti’, p. 36.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Raboni, ‘Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita’, p. 274.

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 275.

between ‘Spazio Oberdan’, its exhibitions and with an area in Paris, the ‘Marais’.³³¹

The comparison with the Seine in Paris, features in another aforementioned article by Raboni about Corso Buenos Aires, ‘Venezia, Buenos Aires. L’imprevedibile bazar’. John Foot claims that ‘Milan never has been a typically Italian city’.³³² Raboni, however, compares the avenue to a river, even though geographically ‘Milan is a flat city without a river’.³³³ In the quotation below Raboni describes the flow of water, creating a visual and a sonorous image with two pavements becoming transformed into docks or piers along the banks of the river. Raboni places the river in a natural landscape, adding different levels of urbanisation in the progress towards countryside: ‘si susseguono città, sobborghi, campagna’.³³⁴ Thus, a dynamic place, the imaginary river of Corso Buenos Aires, is juxtaposed with the immobility of natural canals in Milan, Navigli, a previous source of fog, resembling an old artistic photo.

Niente, a Milano, assomiglia a un fiume quanto corso Buenos Aires. Non certo i Navigli, immobili, nebbiosi e pittoreschi come in una vecchia incisione o in una fotografia ‘artistica’. Corso Buenos Aires è, invece, imprevedibile e vivo come un grande fiume d’America: a tratti lento e pigro, a tratti allegro e veloce, pieno di vento e di rumore e, si direbbe, di bandiere. Percorrendolo, il paesaggio offerto dalle due rive – i due marciapiedi, le due banchine – cambia di continuo; si alternano epoche diverse, si susseguono città, sobborghi, campagna. Si sente che c’è una destra e una sinistra: abitare di qua o di là, verso la Stazione Centrale o verso Città Studi, in via Melzo o in via Castaldi, è diverso come è diverso, a Parigi, abitare sulla *Rive gauche* o sulla *Rive droite*.³³⁵

Foot writes also about the apparent foreignisation of Italian cities by Italians: ‘Nostalgia for the metropolis and metropolitan culture in Italy frequently appears in the form of evocation of foreign models, especially American ones. [...] However, it could be argued that it was not until the 1990s that Italian cities

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Foot, *Milan since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity*, p. 71. However, there is a complicated system of canals that was used for the construction of the Duomo. ‘Oggi è assai difficile, per gli abitanti di Milano e per i numerosi turisti in visita della città, rendersi conto che non solo la città ma addirittura l’intera ragione, per la quasi totalità della sua storia, è stata una “terra d’acqua”. La Lombardia ha rappresentato fino ai tempi non lontani quello che in termini scientifici si definisce un ecosistema di “terre umide” unico nel suo genere, certamente in Italia, ma verosimile anche in Europa’. Sala, Giuseppe, *Milano sull’acqua: ieri, oggi, domani* (Milan: Skira, 2014), p. 25. See also Antonio Gentile, Maurizio Brown, and Giampiero Spadoni, *Viaggio nel sottosuolo di Milano tra acque e canali segreti* (Milan: Comune di Milano, 1990).

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Venezia, Buenos Aires. L’imprevedibile bazar’, p. 162.

³³⁵ Ibid., pp. 162–163.

began to acquire some of the features of the modern metropolises'.³³⁶ Even though in Raboni's quote we see a French and an American river, he describes the Milan of 1986 as a modern, dynamic metropolis. On these two banks one can find almost everything, buy almost everything: 'Quanto al resto, c'è davvero tutto; pensioni e cinema, pelliccerie e librerie, negozi di scarpe o cappelli e negozi di orologi a cucù, di piatti scompagnati, di animali vivi'.³³⁷

Milan developed greatly during the period of its economic growth, when many southern Italians came to the 'economic capital', and also during its industrialisation: for example, the initial scene from the previously mentioned film *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960), when the whole family travels by train from Bari to Milan to join one of the brothers. 'The great wave of immigrants during the boom did not take Milan completely by surprise. Milan was already a city of immigrants accustomed, over at least a century, to absorbing populations from elsewhere'.³³⁸ In fact, the period of de-industrialisation was later characterised by international migration, when people from Africa and former Italian colonies started to emigrate: 'gente con facce bianche e gente con facce nere, grigie, olivastre, gialline...'.³³⁹ Raboni rejoices in the ever increasing list of skin colours as he does in the different bars and restaurants:

Il quadrato di strade che va, sulla riva sinistra, da piazzale Oberdan a via San Gregorio, è chiamato, non a caso, la *casbah*; ed è l'unico posto, a Milano, dove trattorie toscane, pizzerie napoletane e hamburgerie convivono, a pochi passi di distanza, con un ristorante egiziano o somalo o con un *take away* cinese.³⁴⁰

In this essay Raboni describes the city in the afternoon and at night. Corso Buenos Aires is compared not only to a dead city centre ('guscio') but also generally to other neighbourhoods in Milan. Finally, we see it personified, blinking with its neon lights, surviving the night victoriously and sniffing the aromas of cappuccinos and brioche in the morning.³⁴¹

³³⁶ Lumley and Foot, p. 9.

³³⁷ Giovanni Raboni, 'Venezia, Buenos Aires. Imprevedibile Bazar', p. 163.

³³⁸ Gianfranco Petrillo, 'The Two Waves: Milan as a City of Immigration, 1955-1995', in *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy*, ed. by Robert Lumley and John Foot (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004), pp. 31-45 (p. 34).

³³⁹ Giovanni Raboni, 'Venezia, Buenos Aires. Imprevedibile Bazar', p. 163.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ The elements arising from the process of walking such as smells, sounds and foot movements contribute to the appropriation of the cityscape: 'Perhaps most striking is the sensory experience opened up by walking, which heightens intensely the intimacy of contact between individual and

Al crepuscolo, quando i milanesi vanno rumorosamente a chiudersi in casa e lo spettrale centro si anima, spettralmente, di signore eleganti e di emarginati in maschera, il mio Corso – il vero Corso – si prepara a sopravvivere, mutato in se stesso, identico a se stesso, fino all'alba. E mentre, a poco a poco, tutti i quartieri della città si spengono, si trasformano in ordinate cataste di forzieri, in labirinti di facciate cieche, qui la gente (altra gente, forse, rispetto a quella del giorno; ma sempre la gente di tutti i colori, di tutte le razze) continua a camminare alla ricerca di chissà cosa, fermandosi agli incroci, sostando davanti alle vetrine dei negozi chiusi come se fossero aperti. Le luci delle tabaccherie, della farmacia notturna, delle edicole dove si può comprare il giornale del giorno dopo, promettono soccorsi altrove impensabili a chi soffre d'insonnia, di solitudine, di pene d'amore, ai fumatori distratti, a chi vorrebbe 'partire per partire', ai cacciatori di immagini e di voci. Corso Buenos Aires veglia per tutti, continua a fabbricare rumori, ad ammiccare con le sue insegne a neon, accompagnando, complice e materna, che non vuole arrendersi alla morte verso il conforto schiumoso del primo cappuccino e l'odore di vita delle brioches appena sfornate.³⁴²

These two articles illustrate Raboni's feelings towards Milan. He looks into the past and finds inspiration in the history that enshrines the Milan of his childhood, in Manzoni's smell of the plague and the remains of the Lazzaretto. Yet he also depicts the reality of his beloved district of Milan, near Porta Venezia: the publishing houses, shops, newspaper kiosks, cafes, cinemas, galleries, streets, squares and buildings. He rejoices in the dynamism of Corso Buenos Aires, with its mix of languages and ethnic groups, seeing in the energy of the migrants the future of Milan.

So far this thesis has reviewed Raboni's links to Milan in terms of his rootedness and in the context of his writings. Having discussed his articles about Porta Venezia, I now turn to analysis of the two poetic texts, mentioned by Raboni at the end of the article 'Corso Buenos Aires: multietnico e pieno di vita'. Through this analysis I illustrate how the image of the Milan and the cityscape, from a descriptive journalistic representation, transforms into poetry through the process of further interiorisation and my linguistic analysis also considers the stylistic techniques that help to recreate this interiorised image of cityscape.

urban fabric: the rhythmic, direct contact between foot and pavement, and the sounds, smells, and flavours which parts of the city produce at different moments, compound the slow, searching vision of the city to allow the walker almost to live the city as an organism and thus to have a privileged knowledge of its physical contours, consistency, and movement'. See Jennifer Burns, *Migrant Imaginaries: Figures in Italian Migration Literature* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), p.135.

³⁴² Giovanni Raboni, 'Venezia, Buenos Aires. Imprevedibile Bazar', pp. 163–164.

2.2. A Critical analysis of Raboni's 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale'

2.2.1. The structure of *Ogni terzo pensiero* and 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale' (PPT)

It is first necessary to contextualise and explain the structure of *petits poèmes en prose* 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale' and, enlarging the scale, the book that comprises these proses. The compilation of verses *Ogni terzo pensiero* (1993) consists of three parts: firstly, the experimental sonnets 'Sonetti di infermità e convalescenza', secondly, short passages in prose entitled 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale' (PPT) and thirdly, 'Altri sonetti'. Raboni consciously structured the compilation, playing with the number three. Apart from the title itself and the three sections of the book, each section itself has a series of sonnets or pieces divisible by the number three: in the first part there are nine sonnet-sentences, the second part has nine poems in prose, and the last part has twenty-seven sonnets, of a more traditional form.

Numbers feature both in the collection's structure and the prose section. Raboni begins his narration with numbers: *sessant'anni, trentadue mesi, due viole, due violoncelli, unico pensiero*. It is interesting to note that all the numbers in Raboni's work, incorporated in structure or in text, form part of the unified whole and represent the *unico pensiero* mentioned at the end of the first *poème en prose*.

This emphasis on numbers, particularly the number three, and the use of the sonnet form, are features of the intertextuality connecting Raboni's own poetic works with his translation of Baudelaire and his experience as a reader of Dante. Dante heavily influenced Baudelaire, just like Raboni.³⁴³ Baudelaire paid particular attention to the structure of *Les Fleurs de mal* and was frustrated when several of its poems were censored as he felt this undermined his interpretation of the book. Other scholars have noted the dialogue between Raboni and Dante,

³⁴³ Patty investigates Baudelaire's direct contacts with Dante's *Inferno* and finds some intertextual references in *Les Fleurs du mal*. See James S. Patty, 'Baudelaire's Knowledge and Use of Dante', *Studies in Philology*, 53.4 (1956), 599–611. In 1991 Raboni organized a three-year project of readings of Divina Commedia by one hundred special guests ('lettori speciali') that included the poets Volponi, Fortini, Luzi, Macchia, Attilio Bertolucci, Magris, Scialoja, Zanzotto, Strehler, Jolanda Insano, Patrizia Valduga. See Stefania Chinzari, 'Giovanni Raboni: ma il Paradiso non può attendere', *L'Unità*, 1 December 1991, p.19.

especially Di Franza in her analysis of the evidence of rhymes and links to Dante in Raboni's lyrics.³⁴⁴

PPT includes nine pieces of short prose, in which the city of Milan is always the protagonist. The choice of form of *petits poèmes en prose* can be also an oblique homage to Baudelaire as the author of 'Petits poèmes en prose: Le spleen de Paris'.³⁴⁵ In addition, Raboni explains the choice of the prose instead of the verse form as:

Forse perché quei luoghi li ho conosciuti prima della mia poesia, anche se poi essi stessi hanno fatto la mia poesia. Forse è l'inconscio bisogno di dare a questo pellegrinaggio una forma ancora al di là della poesia. Ovviamente c'è anche un'esigenza strutturale: queste prose presentano comunque una forte chiusura sintattica nel giro delle frasi, dunque se da una parte c'è una variante di forma metrica chiusa, dall'altra c'è il suo rovescio simmetrico. Questo, anche per dire che il libro non è una *raccolta*, ma una sua struttura che avevo in mente mentre scrivevo'.³⁴⁶

In translating Baudelaire, Raboni conjoined different lexis registers: colloquial words and constructions with exceedingly poetic metaphorical discourse. Stylistically PPT reflects the same principle. There is another connection between Raboni's prose poems and his work as translator, relating to his major project - the translation of Proust. There is a Proustian emphasis in these short pieces, on unusual intricate syntax, long phrases and lack of punctuation, a feature that Raboni highlighted during his work on *À la recherche du temps perdu*. This style is also similar to the long phrases found in 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere', described by Giovanni Giudici as 'una *mini-recherche*'³⁴⁷ and analysed in the next section (2.3).

Raboni composed *Ogni terzo pensiero* while recovering in Nice from a heart attack in Kassel. The experience of being in two unfamiliar places, surrounded

³⁴⁴ For example, the title of one of Raboni's collections, *Nel libro della mente* (1996), that became later a part of *Quare tristis* (1998), is the quote from Dante's *Rime*, XX, 59, which he used as an epigraph for the collection: 'secondo che si trova | nel libro della mente che vien mento'. Regarding the echoes from Dante in Raboni's writings see Concetta Di Franza, 'Suggestioni danteschi nella poesia di Giovanni Raboni', *Rivista di studi danteschi*, 2.2 (2002), 389-410.

³⁴⁵ Zublena points out that the tradition of inserting short prose pieces is rooted in Baudelaire. He analyses, in general, the tendency of authors, started in Italy in the 1970s, to write pieces of prose, or to switch from poetry to prose. Paolo Zublena, 'Esiste (ancora) la poesia in prosa?', *L'Ulisse*, 13, 2010, pp. 43-47. See also Di Franza, 'Prosa e poesia in Giovanni Raboni. Il fascino discreto di una naturalezza straniata'

³⁴⁶ Durante, p.17.

³⁴⁷ Giovanni Giudici, 'L'immaginario come liturgia', *Corriere della Sera*, 28 October 1998, p. 25.

by people speaking a foreign language triggered his desire to employ the sonnet form, considered by Raboni almost new to his body of work.³⁴⁸ Raboni mentions three different cities, in Germany and in France, plus languages (French and German, but also others) as he recalls the multicultural environment in the hospital in Nice, similar to his descriptions of ‘multiethnic’ Corso Buenos Aires.³⁴⁹ New foreign places and sound of a foreign language triggered the use of ‘new’ form in Raboni and shaped in a certain way his poetic discourse:

È curioso: l’infarto mi capitò su un aereo per Francoforte, dopodiché fui ricoverato a Kassel; per l’operazione, invece, sono andato a Nizza. L’uno e l’altro, luoghi non familiari, intorno a me persone che parlavano una lingua diversa dalla mia, e questo accentuava quel senso di limbo. Certo, io ho scritto dopo: forse, però, questa specie di piccole fanfare mi è rimasta nell’orecchio, ed è da lì che mi sono riappassionato, in modo quasi folle e maniacale, al sonetto.³⁵⁰

He highlights the sense of limbo, of not-belonging, traumatic isolation caused by his illness. The choice of the sonnet form, with varied length lines and rhythm, was both semi-ironic and challenging. For example, in the first part of the nine sonnet-sentences Raboni defines the rhythm of the meditation mixed with the absurd:

Ho scelto vari ritmi per affrontare corpo-a-corpo con la forma del sonetto in un modo un po’ laterale, quasi scherzoso. In quella prima sezione mi pare che venga fuori sia il ritmo della meditazione, sia quello dell’assurdo. Per esprimere, forse, il senso di un limbo, di una non-appartenenza, di un isolamento traumatico, della sospensione determinata dalla malattia.³⁵¹

The connection with the other sonnet tradition (more evident in the following collection of verses *Quare tristis* (1998)) and to Shakespeare, is seen in the title of the book, based on a line from *The Tempest*: ‘And hence retire me to my Milan, where | Every third thought shall be my grave’. The author guides the reader, introducing the motif of death (‘grave’) from the beginning: from the title and the epigraph.

³⁴⁸ As has been already mentioned in Chapter 1, Raboni had tried previously, although sporadically, to write sonnets in *Versi guerrieri e amorosi* (1990).

³⁴⁹ ‘[A]vevo scelto personalmente di farmi operare a Nizza da un chirurgo molto bravo: in questo ambiente abbastanza pittoresco per chi è abituato ai medici italiani, c’era il senso di una grande comunità internazionale. Ricordo che l’anestesista era tunisino e le infermiere di diversi parti del mondo’. See Raboni in Piccini, pp. 12–13. In addition, Tuan points out that the environment shapes our perception: ‘Physical environment can influence a people’s sense of size and spaciousness. [...] The second factor is that culture and experience strongly influence the interpretation of environment’. See Ji-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place. The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), pp. 54–55.

³⁵⁰ Raboni in Durante, p. 17.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

2.2.2 Time and space dimensions in ‘Piccola passeggiata trionfale’

I have numbered each *poème en prose*, from 1 to 9 to facilitate the analysis of PPT. Raboni separates the poems with a space in-between. I have included the full text of each *poème en prose* since they are short and this better helps to shape my close reading. Each poem contains Raboni’s autobiographical references, which must be deciphered to understand their meaning and all nine contain a philosophical input evolving from Raboni’s memories. However, the overview of Raboni’s life and writings from the previous chapters also provides a solid foundation for the analysis. My comments follow Raboni’s italicised source text. I indicate only some features of the prosody in my comments, but provide the more detailed phonetic analysis in tables placed after my commentary on each *poème en prose* (Tables 1–9). Appendix 2A is also dedicated to the close reading of PPT and focuses on the time markers in each *poème en prose*.

(1.)

Che lunga, lentissima rincorsa. Ci ho messo quasi sessant’anni per passare da una parte all’altra del corso, trentadue, mese più mese meno, per coprire la distanza fra il quintetto in sol minore con due viole e il quintetto in do maggiore con due violoncelli. Ma queste cose e le altre ambientate incredibilmente altrove sono state fatte come tenendo il fiato, in un unico pensiero.

Raboni alludes to his age by introducing numbers in the first prose poem and refers to a very long run-up to his death; understandable as *Ogni terzo pensiero* was written while he was in hospital. In 1993 Raboni was sixty one, ‘quasi sessant’anni’, as mentioned in the second sentence. The reference to his age features also in the poem ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’: ‘i miei cinquanta e passa anni successivi’ (lines 74-75). Interestingly Raboni is not specific about time, often blurring a time period, adding his uncertainty (‘*quasi sessant’anni*’

[my emphasis]) and telling us that he does not remember how many years ago this happened, or that he prefers not to be precise. Time markers, which seem to be unimportant, and the use of rounded numbers in the text, are juxtaposed with the very considered structure of Raboni's other works. This use of imprecise numbers follows Raboni's general technique of blurring all boundaries: in time dimension, in language registers, between prose and poetic text etc., 'come tenendo il fiato, in un unico pensiero'. The metaphor 'unico pensiero' relates to the term 'inclusività' from Raboni's critical reception, used by Soldani, Zucco, and Magro and discussed in the introduction. This quotation from the end of the first prose poem can be also seen as a key to understanding Raboni's work: in writing long sentences he tries to avoid boundaries, as if the text should be read without breathing.

In terms of biographical details the text includes the reference to Corso Buenos Aires, because Raboni was born and spent his adolescence on one side of the Corso, Via San Gregorio, and at the end of his life he came back, moving almost to the same place, but on the other side of the Corso, Via Melzo. For Raboni 'il Corso' meant Corso Buenos Aires, as he explained in the article 'Venezia. Buenos Aires. L'imprevedibile bazar', discussed in the previous section.³⁵² Different parts of the *Corso* are like two banks of a river. River or *Corso*, a symbol of life and time, is related thus to the last piece of prose (number nine here), where the protagonist crosses the *Corso* for the last time during his own funeral.

Space and time perspectives are also linked in this poem. In the first instance the time reference of 'about sixty years' is related to distance in a geographical sense (from one side of the *Corso* to another), while the second time marker, though describing a time period in months, 'thirty two months' (*trentadue, mese più mese meno*), measures the metaphorical distance expressed in musical terms, not

³⁵² '[C]orso Vittorio Emanuele è 'il Corso' non per chi ci vive, dal momento che non ci vive nessuno, né in generale per i milanesi, ma solo per chi viene da fuori – dalla provincia, dall'hinterland – e per i turisti stranieri. [...] per i milanesi, dicevo, 'il Corso' è invece, a seconda di dove abitano, corso Garibaldi o corso Genova, corso Vercelli o corso di Porta Venezia, e così via. || Per me – per me che sono nato a Porta Venezia, nell'area dell'Lazzaretto di manzoniana memoria, e che dopo molte peregrinazioni e soste in altri quartieri, compreso l'inesistente e inabitabile centro storico, sono alla fine tornato a viverci – "il Corso è, evidentemente e irresistibilmente, corso Buenos Aires'. See Giovanni Raboni, 'Venezia, Buenos Aires. Imprevedibile Bazar', p. 162.

geographically: *la distanza fra il quintetto in sol minore con due viole e il quintetto in do maggiore con due violoncelli*. This is one example of where subjectivity and the memories of the protagonist create certain obstacles in understanding the text.³⁵³ However, the reference first to Mozart and then to Schubert illustrates Raboni's passion for music.³⁵⁴ In addition, this analysis, the different versions of his poetic translations (for example, in Chapter 4, while translating Baudelaire), and the attention to minor corrections, reveal how sensitive he was to the musicality of poetic discourse and how carefully he treated every sound.

The first phrase of the poem, and in general all of the PPT, is very short and potentially misleading. It is a short phrase without a verb, and seems even shorter compared to the rest of the sentences in PPT, which are very long and demand effort from the reader in order to decipher them. Apparently, in the first draft, Raboni wrote a longer sentence: 'Che lunga, lentissima rincorsa è stata mia', then shortened it making it less personal. However, we understand that he is speaking about his emotions and feelings, because in the next sentence he uses a verb in the first person ('ho messo'). In fact, the first sentence of the PPT could be the first line of a poem. This is noteworthy, because the last prose poem is written in four lines. Raboni splits the poetic prose into lines, creating a combination of poem and prose. So we can say that Raboni both starts and finishes PPT like a poem, blurring the line between the poem and prose and creating at the same time a circular composition.

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³⁵³ This illustrates what Harvey explains about the standard measurements for space and time in the 'relational space' (as opposed to the category of 'absolute space' and 'relative space'): 'Measurements become more and more problematic the closer we move towards a world of relational space-time. But why would it be presumed that space-time only exists if it is measurable and quantifiable in certain traditional ways? This leads to some interesting reflection on the failure (perhaps better construed as limitations) of positivism and empiricism to evolve adequate understanding of spatio-temporality beyond those that can be measured. In a way, relational conceptions of space-time bring us to the point where *mathematics, poetry, and music converge* [my emphasis]'. See Harvey, 'Space as a Key Word', p. 4.

³⁵⁴ As mentioned in Chapter 1, Raboni's passion for music is seen in his poems *Stanze per la musica di Adriano Guarnieri*, written for a music concert. See in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, pp. 965–969.

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| <p><i>Che lunga, lentissima rincorsa. Ci ho messo quasi sessant'anni per passare da una parte all'altra del corso, trentadue, mese più mese meno,</i></p> <p><i>per coprire la distanza fra il quintetto in sol minore con due viole e il quintetto in do maggiore con due violoncelli.</i></p> <p><i>Ma queste cose e le altre ambientate incredibilmente altrove</i></p> <p><i>sono state fatte come tenendo il fiato, in un unico pensiero.</i></p> | <p>(N, I), (S, N), (P,A,R – <i>per, passare, parte</i>, identical syllables PA), <i>trEntAduE</i> – binds the previous part with assonance A and the next extract with assonance E, ME.</p> <p>Two parallel constructions with the same words <i>il quintetto in</i> and <i>con due viole(violoncelli)</i>. Two words <i>minore</i> and <i>maggiore</i> are also connected to the previous piece with the alliteration M.</p> <p>Assonance A, E, I and alliteration L, T, R, M, N</p> <p>Alliteration F, T, N</p> |
| <p><i>Che luNga, leNtissima riNcorsa.(N,I) Ci ho meSSo quasi SeSSaNt'aNNi [PeR PaSSaRe (S,N) da una PaRte all'altra del corso,(P,A,R)] trentadue, MEse più MEse MENo, per coprire la distanza fra [il quintetto in] sol Minore [con due viole] e [il quintetto in do Maggiore] [con due viol]oncelli. MA quEstE cose E LE ALTRE [AMbiENTATE incREdibilMENTE] ALTRovE sono sTaTe FaTTe come TeNeNdo il FiaTo, iN uN uNico peNsiero.</i></p> | |

Table 1. Prosody in PPT, poem 1

(2.)

Che nella casa di fronte ci fosse il circolo del dopolavoro ferrovieri e non il cinema a luci rosse o il piccolo ristorante per breve tempo alla moda che gli sarebbero via via succeduti è naturalmente irrilevante per l'incalcolabile maggioranza degli esseri viventi. Ma la differenza rimane e non è priva di rapporto (anche se è molto difficile dire di quale rapporto si tratti) con il moto dei corpi celesti e con il funzionamento della mia valvola mitrale.

The first word of the second *poème en prose* is identical to the previous text: *che*. However here, this kind of syntactical parallelism introduces an inversion, adding a colloquial patina to this rather long and poetic sentence. Raboni does not want to start the phrase by stating that something is not interesting to us (*irrilevante*), or for *l'incalcolabile maggioranza degli esseri viventi*. The brackets in the second sentence split the long phrase into smaller chunks and produce the

effect of a dialogue, almost a confession. The protagonist's personal feelings are revealed through the adjective 'mia'. The style of the main clause in the second phrase (without the brackets) and the main clause in the first phrase reflects that of scientific discourse, a passage from a biology textbook (*l'incalcolabile maggioranza degli esseri viventi; il funzionamento della mia valvola mitrale*) or from astronomy or physics textbooks (*il moto dei corpi celesti*). Raboni often combines different lexis registers, and here we see an example of this when he combines poetic and scientific discourse. There are other examples, for instance when he uses legal terminology from his time as a lawyer.³⁵⁵

In the second prose poem Raboni narrates the story of the building opposite his house. First the building housed a social club for railway workers (mentioned also in some other texts). After a short period of time it became a small restaurant and later a pornographic cinema.³⁵⁶ Raboni mourns the past and lives in his memories, so he feels a quickening of his heart while thinking about the building's past. Here we can draw a parallel with Certeau's and Giard's 'spirits'³⁵⁷ of the place, that bear *la casa di fronte*:

Like their divine ancestors, these objects play a role of actors in the city, not because of what they do or say but because their strangeness is silent, as well as their existence, concealed from actuality. Their withdrawal makes people speak – it generates narratives – and it allows action; through its ambiguity, it 'authorises' spaces of operations.

³⁵⁵ To illustrate the use of professional judicial or economic lexis, I quote below two sonnets from the same collection *Ogni terzo pensiero*. In addition, these sonnets prove the use of fluid discourse within a fixed verse form, the main characteristic of both writings analysed in Chapter 2. Both sonnets using legal and economic terminology have no titles, but form part of the last section of the book, entitled 'Altri sonetti'. The first example, is the eighteenth sonnet in this section: 'Che male t'abbiamo fatto, che pena | vuoi che scontiamo per appartenerti | come cellule a un cancro, come inerti | petali di rosa a una rosa piena | di spine? Sanguinosamente, oscena | mia patria, procuri *indizi, reperti* | di *archeologia criminale* agli esperti | d'altri millenni, prepari la scena | d'un *processo incelebrabile* se | del sangue di tante stragi non c'è | anima che sia monda e più invisibile | degli occhi della *giustizia*, più orribile | di quelli della gòrgone per quanti | la sognano è la faccia dei mandanti'[my emphasis].

The second sonnet is placed later in this section, twenty-fourth: 'Che in tutto fra tutte *suprema* sia | la *legge del mercato*, che a lei deva | *subordinarsi* restando utopia | per sempre tutto quello che solleva | l'uomo da se stesso sembra alla mia | mente quasi incredibile. Ma alleva | menti per crederci l'*economia* | trionfante fa che ciascuna s'imbeva | di quel credo miserabile e creda | a esso fieramente come al più santo | Vangelo ; e non ha scampo che rimpianto | dell'altro s'ostina finché non creda | di schianto il cuore a provare e di noia | trema dove per altri è ottusa gioia' [my emphasis]. See Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, pp. 834, 840.

³⁵⁶ Pornographic cinema is a recurrent topic. Another pornographic cinema is mentioned in the poem 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere'.

³⁵⁷ Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard, 'Ghosts in the City', in *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2, Living and Cooking*, by Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 133–43 (p. 135).

Moreover, these inanimate objects occupy today, in painting, the place of ancient gods.³⁵⁸

Even though the building is not human, the protagonist mourns its past as he would the loss of an old friend. Furthermore, the restaurant and cinema, which replaced his 'old friend', have a negative connotation: 'per breve tempo alla moda'. New things, fashion and innovation, as well as other things that might interest the uncountable majority of human beings (*l'incalcolabile maggioranza degli esseri viventi*) do not interest Raboni.

The second sentence ends drawing a parallel between two processes, individual and all-encompassing, both expressed through movement and natural science: a heart beating through a 'mitral valve' (*il funzionamento della mia valvola mitrale*), compared with the universe as a whole (*il moto dei corpi celesti*). In addition, the second sentence highlights the importance of the historical context for the protagonist, reflected in this building, and of the global history. There is a clash between temporary things, represented here as between a pornographic cinema and a small fashionable restaurant. The transient nature, *alla moda*, is even emphasised through the expression that follows, *per breve tempo*.

The protagonist shows disdain towards *l'incalcolabile maggioranza degli esseri viventi*. Raboni highlights the animalistic nature of people, the same 'metropolitan masses' or 'amorphous crowd of passers-by' identified by Benjamin in Baudelaire.³⁵⁹ They are not interested in the history of this building, because it does not relate to their personal lives. Furthermore, in the third poem, we will meet another unknown protagonist, a passerby, who thinks only about his own business and passes by the scene of a murder without even looking at it. In general, the urban poetry – and according to Raboni the focus of modern poetry is on the city and almost all modern poetry can be considered urban – requires the image of the masses. Crowds or passers-by become for metropolitan poetry one of the key images shaping the identity of the city and serving as a lens through which the narration evolves, as Benjamin notes about Baudelaire's poetry: 'In *Tableaux parisiens* the secret presence of a crowd is demonstrable

³⁵⁸ Ibid., pp.135-136.

³⁵⁹ Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, pp. 119–120.

almost everywhere. [...] The mass was the agitated veil; through it Baudelaire saw Paris'.³⁶⁰

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| <i>Che nella casa di fronte ci fosse il circolo del dopolavoro ferroviari e non il cinema a luci rosse</i> | F, I, syllable CI |
| <i>o il piccolo ristorante per breve tempo alla moda</i> | R, P |
| <i>che gli sarebbero via via succeduti è naturalmente irrilevante per l'incalcolabile maggioranza degli esseri viventi.</i> | N, T, R, I esseRI, RImane, pRIva - RI |
| <i>Ma la differenza rimane e non è priva di rapporto (anche se è molto difficile dire di quale rapporto si tratti) con il moto dei corpi celesti e con il funzionamento della mia valvola mitrale.</i> | MA, DIFFerenza - DIFFicile P, R, DI, rapporto-rapporto-corpi CO, M, N, MI deLLA mia vALvoLA mitrALe |
| <i>Che nella casa di Fronte CI Fosse Il Circolo del dopolavoro FerrovierI e non Il Cinema a luCI rosse o Il Piccolo RIstoRante PeR BReve temPo alla moda che gli sarebbero via via succeduti è NaTuralmenTe IRRilevaNTe peR l'INcalcolabIle Maggioranza degli esseRI viveNTI. MA la differeNza riMANe e non è PRiva di RaPPoRto (anche se è MOlto DIfficile DIre DI quale RaPPoRto si tratti) CON il MOto dei CORpi celesti e CON il fuNzioNaMeNto della MIa valvola MItrale.</i> | |

Table 2. Prosody in PPT, poem 2

(3.)

Mattoni e cemento durano infinitamente meno dei numeri ai quali è affidata dunque in prospettiva l'identità del quartiere e dai quali dipende per esempio se nella ben nota e generalizzata invarianza dell'altitudine una strada sale o discende o se ancora per qualche anno qualcuno trovandosi a passare di qui per una compravendita di tessuti o per i bisogni imperterriti del rimorso non alzerà nemmeno gli occhi alle irriconoscibili finestre dell'edificio ma sussurerà con riconoscente apprensione il nome glorioso dell'assassina.

The third *poème en prose* consists of one sentence only, however, it is not the shortest fragment, but the longest one. Raboni uses no commas, making the prose even more difficult to decipher. The use of such a long phrase reflects Proust's style. Raboni follows the rule that he adopted while translating Proust, by not

³⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 122–123.

using a full stop in the translation if it was absent from the original text, as stated in Chapter 1.

The protagonist continues his walk through Via San Gregorio. However, here he refers not to his personal story or childhood, but to a violent murder at 40 Via San Gregorio on 29 November 1946, when the cruelty of the Second World War was still in the air. The murder – ‘il primo grande caso di cronaca nera del dopoguerra’³⁶¹ – was committed by Rina Fort (Caterina Fort), known also as ‘belva di Via San Gregorio’ thanks to Dino Buzzati who made this case infamous through his report in *Corriere della Sera* (3 December 1946).³⁶² The young woman killed the wife and the three children (aged seven, five and ten months) of her lover. The murder happened in the early evening, yet no one heard anything. When everyone retired for the night, only one window on the first floor remained lit. Raboni mentions this window in his poem: *irriconscibili finestre dell’edificio*. Windows in general are important in Raboni’s cityscape descriptions (see Chapter 3).

In the poem ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’ (Section 2.3) we learn there are six windows remaining in the Lazzaretto leaving traces of history, as well as bricks: ‘mattoni color sangue’. In this *poème en prose*, there are references to both windows and bricks. Unlike windows, bricks are represented as a temporary material. Yet, while the building stands it reminds us of the horrible murder that happened there. People do not forget the past completely: the passer-by will not look at the windows. Even if he does, he will not recognise them, but he will still whisper *il nome glorioso dell’assassina*.

As in the previous poem, we see a mixture of different linguistic registers: poetic language (*ma sussurerà con riconoscente apprensione il nome glorioso dell’assassina*), colloquial expressions (*dunque, dai quali dipende per esempio*), and scientific discourse (*nella ben nota e generalizzata invarianza dell’altitudine; una compravendita di tessuti*).

³⁶¹ Leda Balzarotti and Barbara Miccolupi, “‘Rina Fort, la belva di san Gregorio’ Il primo caso di “nera” del dopoguerra nelle pagine d’archivio”, *Corriere della Sera* (Milan, 26 November 2016), Digital Edition <<http://www.corriere.it/extra-per-voi/2016/11/28/rina-fort-belva-san-gregorio-primo-caso-nera-dopoguerra-pagine-d-archivio-138d0c8a-b580-11e6-a2c1-e1ab33bf33ae.shtml>> [accessed 14 August 2017].

³⁶² Fourteen articles about this case, written by Buzzati for *Corriere della Sera* between 1946 and 1950 are collected in the first volume of Viganò’s edition, entitled *Crimini e misteri*. See Dino Buzzati, *La ‘nera’ di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò (Milano: Mondadori, 2002).

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| <p><i>Mattoni e cemento durano infinitamente meno dei numeri</i></p> <p><i>ai quali è affidata dunque in prospettiva l'identità del quartiere e</i></p> <p><i>dai quale dipende per esempio se nella ben nota e generalizzata invarianza dell'altitudine una strada sale o discende o se ancora per qualche anno qualcuno trovandosi a passare di qui</i></p> <p><i>per una compravendita di tessuti o per i bisogni imperterriti del rimorso non alzerà nemmeno gli occhi alle irriconoscibili finestre dell'edificio ma sussurerà con riconoscente apprensione il nome glorioso dell'assassina.</i></p> | <p>M, N, T, E, syllable ME ceMENTo – infinitaMENTE – MENo – nuMERi Q, D-T, U, A, syllable QU pRospeTTiva – quaRTieRe</p> <p>D, P A</p> <p>S, A QUA, QUalche- QUalcuno – Qui</p> <p>P, R, M</p> <p>N, R FI L, R, S, A</p> |
| <p><i>MaTToNi e cEMENTo durano infiniTaMENTE MENo dei nuMERi ai QUALi è affiDaTa dunQUe in ProsPeTTiva l'iDenTiTà del QUArTiere e dai QUALi DiPeNDe PEr esemPio se nella ben nota e generalizzata invarianza dell'altitudine una strada sale o discende o se ancora per QUALChe anno QUALCuno trovandoSi a PaSSare di QUi PeR una comPRavendita di teSSuti o per i bisogni iMpeRTeRRITI del RIMoRso NoN alzeRà NemmeNo gli occhi alle IRRIconoscIbIlI FINestRe dell'edIFicio ma SuSSuReRà coN RicoNosceNte appReNsioNe il Nome gloRioso dell'aSSaSSina.</i></p> | |

Table 3. Prosody in PPT, poem 3

(4.)

*Gli alberi agonizzanti nel girello slabbrato che li imprigiona gonfiano l'asfalto
con lo spasmo delle radici fra il chiosco dei giornali e quello della benzina. Lì
compariva la neve; e il tratto di cielo che scavalca via Settembrini ne dimorava
bianco fino alla seconda o terza domenica d'aprile.*

From Via San Gregorio, in the fourth prose poem we move towards Piazza Cincinnato, which also leads to Via Settembrini. Similar to the content of the two previous prose poems, we find an opposition between two worlds: the present and the past. The trees, elements of the natural world from the past, are trying to

survive in the new urban reality.³⁶³ In fact, the natural world is captured in a post-industrial reality, because we see personified trees dying from their imprisoned roots. The poem continues in a way that is similar to the botanical and corporeal theme of the poem 'Posto' (see the Introduction).

Two major themes of Raboni's lyric, illness and death, occur in these two sentences. Manzoni's theme of illness continues here with words *agonizzanti* and *spasmo*. The contrast between the two worlds is highlighted by the fact that the roots are trying to break through the asphalt and gain freedom. Moreover, the adjective for *girello* is repellent: *slabbrato*, with its links to the human body, *il labbro* (even if here it means 'edge'). So, at the beginning of the sentence not only are trees personified, but also the unnatural material belonging to the new urban reality. The image of trees therefore is charged even more with suffering; the artificial material trapping the roots. The past belongs to trees, snow and sky, while in the new post-industrial world there are newspapers, asphalt and petrol.

Furthermore, the adjective *slabbrato* and the second sentence illustrate again the absence of borders. Regarding *slabbrato*, the boundaries of the asphalt lost their original straight lines. The skyline illustrates also the lack of borders: while shifting the perspective of the reader from the floor and the road next to him/her, to the sky and the horizon, where we cannot draw a clear line between the sky and the street covered with the snow. The perspective here changes because from an object (*girello slabbrato*) and a tree the narration goes further, not just literally but also in a metaphorical sense. While shifting our gaze we immerse ourselves deeper in the past. The first sentence is in the present tense, while the second sentence is in *imperfetto*, a tense used for Raboni's memories.

The contrast between the two worlds extends also to colours, the black of the asphalt and white of the snow. Black is the colour of death, the dominant subject of Raboni's lyric. White is the colour of snow, symbolising the past and representing a relic, because Raboni is not used to seeing snow in the city anymore and is surprised if it snows:

³⁶³ 'Milan is often turned into a hybrid construct in which the relics of the countryside are a reminder of a lost space and age'. See Giuliana Pieri, 'Crime and the City in the Detective Fiction of Giorgio Scerbanenko', in *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004), pp. 144–55 (p. 149).

L'altro giorno sono uscito di casa e cadeva una specie di nevischio. *Ho subito pensato che fosse neve finta, una cosa chimica.* Non si può vivere veramente bene in questo stato di sospetto, io non sento gli effetti dell'inquinamento, o m'illudo di non sentirli, ma basta l'idea per mettere a disagio. Detto questo, non saprei fare a meno di questa città, potrei accettare l'idea di vivere a Parigi, oppure un po' a Milano un po' a Roma [my emphasis].³⁶⁴

Furthermore, in the quoted interview from 1991 Raboni believes initially that the snow was chemically produced. He admits that he is scared of the level of pollution in the city, however adds that, in his favourite district the situation seems better: 'Arrivo a dire che mi pare anche meno inquinata, uscendo dal metrò di Porta Venezia mi sembra quasi di respirare un'aria di giardino'.³⁶⁵

The theme of environmental and ecological problems, 'l'ambiente minacciato', appears more often in contemporary Italian literature.³⁶⁶ Twelve years later, Raboni writes about the pollution in Milan in an article and finds the city 'recovering' from an 'illness'.³⁶⁷ He wants people to be more careful towards the city and the environment: 'Se la città sta "fisicamente" meglio, tutti staremo meglio, questo è ovvio. Pensiamo, in più, che se la città è più calma, più distesa, più piacevole da guardare e da ascoltare, insomma più "bella", tutti ne avremo vantaggi più segreti e sottili ma non per questo, credo, meno preziosi'.³⁶⁸

Ironically, he stresses that natural resources start to take care of the city. The winds refresh the air in Milan, and not people with their environmental initiatives: 'Quanto all'inquinamento, sono pronto a credere ciò che molti sostengono o sospettano, ossia che il vento abbia fatto, per rendere l'aria di Milano quasi respirabile, molto di più delle targhe alterne'.³⁶⁹ Raboni continues using the metaphor of breathing, when visual perception and imaginary pictures are transformed into air that we inhale. From physicality and corporeality Raboni shifts to a philosophical approach, important for the understanding of his writings in general, where all feelings are merged together and contribute

³⁶⁴ Gianni Mura, 'La ricerca di Raboni: "Milano è emozione"', *la Repubblica*, 4 February 1991, p. 7.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ See the overview about ecological problems in literature by Scaffai who mentions writings by Zanzotto, Montale, Pusterla, Pasolini, and Calvino. Niccolò Scaffai, 'Paesaggi italiani. Ecologia e letteratura contemporanea', *L'Ulisse*, 14 (2011), 99–103.

³⁶⁷ 'Come ogni essere umano, quando capisce di avere la febbre, prova l'impulso di mettersi a letto e, magari, di prendere un'aspirina, così la città dovrebbe avvertire quasi da sola, quando sta soffocando o fondendo, la necessità di mettersi tranquilla, di diminuire i giri.' See Giovanni Raboni, 'Un fascino ritrovato', *Corriere della Sera*, 8 February 2003, pp. 45–46 (p. 46).

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p.45.

towards the perception of life: ‘Ma diciamo la verità: non si respira solo con i polmoni, si respira anche con gli occhi, con le orecchie, con l’immaginazione’.³⁷⁰

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| <p><i>Gli alberi agonizzanti nel girello slabbrato che li imprigiona gonfiano l’asfalto con lo spasmo delle radici fra il chiosco dei giornali e quello della benzina.</i></p> <p><i>Lì compariva la neve; e il tratto di cielo che scavalca via Settembrini ne dimorava bianco fino alla seconda o terza domenica d’aprile.</i></p> | <p>A, I, L, S, G,R Alberi-AgonizzAnti-AsfAlto-spAsmo-rAdici, GIREllo – impRIGIOna-GIORnali</p> <p>TraTTo – SeTTeMbrini, ScAVAlca (CA-CA)-VIA-Settembrini-dimorAVA (VA-VA) Settembrini - aprile</p> |
| <p><i>GLI ALBeRi Agonizzanti nel GIRELlo sLABBRAtO che li imPRIGIona gonFiano l’AsFALto con lo SPaSmo delle radIci Fra Il chIosco dei gIorNAlI e queLlo deLLa beNziNA. Lì comparIva la neve; e il TraTTo di cielo che Scavalca via SeTTeMbrINI Ne dIMorava bianco fino alla secoNda o TERza DomeNica d’aprile.</i></p> | |

Table 4. Prosody in PPT, poem 4

(5.)

L’origine di ogni stupore è nelle parole che i sordomuti si scambiano all’angolo di due strade come se le schegge del loro silenzio non ci fossero conficcate per sempre all’altezza delle bifore nella facciata neogotica dell’istituto. “Dio li preferirà” è il nostro segreto mentre una mano ci guida nel povero tumulto del crepuscolo verso il puntiglio luminoso della macelleria.

Via Settembrini crosses Via Boscovich (*all’angolo di due strade*), where the national institute for deaf-mute people is located. Here Raboni is specific about place. On the façade of the building, he once again highlights windows (*bifore*) using a precise architectural term.³⁷¹

Unlike the passer-by from poem 3, who is busy or perhaps just does not want to look up, the protagonist here looks at the windows. Then, while speaking about God, refers again to a hurrying pedestrian who can see, but chooses not to do so. The two deaf-mutes in this prose poem are unable to speak, but still they

³⁷⁰ Ibid., p.46.

³⁷¹ We can see how Raboni ‘reads’ the city through the architecture. Tuan points out this formative characteristic of the architecture: ‘Finally, architecture “teaches”. A planned city, a monument, or even a simple dwelling can be a symbol of the cosmos. In the absence of books and formal instruction, architecture is a key to comprehending reality’. Tuan, p. 102.

communicate and the words from their silent conversation are embedded in the building, just as ‘splinters’ of glass, or any other sharp material, can be embedded in things. An interesting metaphor represents their words: *le schegge del loro silenzio*. We are surprised by the fact that people can still communicate silently, and we see the power of the word, even if expressed in sign language. Conversely, often we do not register the things around us, even though we can see them. This refers also to Raboni’s leitmotif, often hidden inside a place or object and dependent on the individual’s perception of visibility and invisibility. Interestingly, Augé wrote about ‘wordless’ communication, but referring to the modern citizen in public places where almost everything is automated. A person nowadays feels more isolated in ‘a world [...] surrendered to solitary individuality’ and doesn’t even need to speak in public, but can just follow the mechanical process, ‘where the habitué of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards *communicates wordlessly*, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce’[my emphasis].³⁷²

There is a reference to time in the word ‘crepuscolo’, the time in-between, when it is not yet dark, but neither is there daylight. (It is worth mentioning Baudelaire’s poems such as ‘Le Crépuscule du soir’ and ‘Le Crépuscule du matin’ from *Tableaux parisiens*.) The dusk is also in the first line of the poem ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’. However here, the dusk adds a more personal feeling with the words ‘povero tumulto’, because it influences ‘our’ feelings, while one hand is guiding us towards light. The butcher and his ‘luminoso puntiglio’, with the suggestion of death and stubbornness could also have a negative connotation. The hand guides us towards the butcher, while God prefers those deaf-mute characters speaking in silence at the crossroads. The dialogue with Baudelaire’s other poem, ‘Les aveugles’ (‘I ciechi’), may be seen through the reference to the sky and God. The blind look always up, where the words by Raboni’s deaf-mute people fly: ‘Leurs yeux, d’où la divine étincelle est partie, | Comme s’ils regardaient au loin, restent levés | Au ciel; on ne les voit jamais vers les pavés | Pencher rêveusement leur tête appesantie’.³⁷³ In addition, the last line

³⁷² Augé, p. 78.

³⁷³ Charles Baudelaire, *I fiori del male: e altre poesie*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Turin: Einaudi, 1999), p. 150.

– a question by the poet - also links the blind people from the poem with God:
‘Je dis: Que cherchent-ils au Ciel, tous ces aveugles?’³⁷⁴

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| <i>L'origine di ogni stupore è nelle parole che i sordomuti si scambiano all'angolo di due strade come se le schegge del loro silenzio non ci fossero conficcate per sempre all'altezza delle bifore nella facciata neogotica dell'istituto. "Dio li preferirà" è il nostro segreto mentre una mano ci guida</i> <i>nel povero tumulto del crepuscolo verso il puntiglio luminoso della macelleria.</i> | S, R, P, I S, D, A S, E orIGIne-schEGGE F, S, P, R, E, PER-semPRE F, L, A I, R T, S, N, M, pREferirà-segREto-mentRE T, P, R, E, U, poVERo-cREpuscolo-VERso M, L, U, tUMulto-IUMinoso, crePUScolo-PUntiglio |
| <i>L'oRIgIne dI ognI StuPoRe è nelle PaRole che i SoRDomuti Si ScAmbiAno All'Angolo Di Due StRaDe comE SE lE SchEggE dEl loro Silenzio non ci FoSSero conFiccate PER semPRE All'AltezzA delle biFore nella FAcciAtA neogotica dell'istituto. "Dio li pReFeRiRà" è il NoStRo SegReTo MeNtRe uNa MaNo ci guida neL Povero TUMULTo deL cREPUScoLo vERSo iL PUNTiGLio LUMInoso dELLA MacELLERia.</i> | |

Table 5. Prosody in PPT, poem 5

(6.)

Niente di personale, ci mancherebbe altro!, nel restauro della fontana. L'acqua che sbalzata oltre i bordi dalla collisione degli scafi si disperdeva a poco a poco nel terriccio ristagna adesso sul selciato in piccole pozze velenose.

From Via Boscovich we move to another street that intersects Via Boscovich, Via Benedetto Marcello, where Raboni describes the public gardens. The splinters of words are transformed here into another analogue of small elements, namely drops of water. From one component of urban architecture (*bifore nella facciata neogotica*), Raboni moves on and continues his reading of the urban 'text' through another monument – the fountain in the public garden. The architectural description of the fountain and its functioning trigger reflection on the past and the future. Like poem 4, poem 6 consists of only two sentences, but

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

these sentences include one of the key messages of Raboni's prose poems: the opposition between the present and the past. The word 'collisione' highlights the conflict between the old and the new that is expressed again through the natural/biological elements in the city, similar to poem 4. Here the natural is represented by *terriccio* that used to absorb the redundant water from the fountain; the new world, conversely, collects and keeps water drops in *pozze velenose* on a new material, *selciato*, used in the urban cityscape. The image of overflowing water suggests the poet's own negativity towards the present. Even when restored, the fountain is surrounded by poisoned water, whereas in the past the fountain worked well. The poisonous and overflowing water suggests the neglected, blocked decay of modern urban life. The fountain and its circulation of water could be associated with the course of life, with the cycles of nature, which now are ruined by the interference of the present, of builders and of progress. This similar connotation of water and life's journey is seen in the poem 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere' where the river (Corso Buenos Aires) carries us forward with its flow.

In this short poem Raboni combines two sentences from different registers. In the first phrase he uses a peculiar syntax, two pauses in a very short sentence with an exclamation mark, highlighting a conversation with the reader: *Niente di personale, ci mancherebbe altro!* The author engages the reader because he speaks about things that concern everyone, stating that he will not speak exclusively about his personal memories. In addition, the colloquial construction *ci mancherebbe altro!* implies a friendly conversation. Raboni uses a similar expression in 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere' in lines 37-38: 'Mai scambiata, | s'intende, una parola'. 'S'intende' and 'Ci mancherebbe altro!' are both quite colloquial expressions, conveying a level of trust between two speakers, and are often followed by a personal opinion. Raboni joins two disparate phrases using different techniques: a colloquial phrase with pauses and peculiar syntax is juxtaposed with a long phrase without any punctuation and written in poetic style using lexis from a high register and specific technical terms describing the fountain's internal mechanism.

In the second sentence, the use of two grammatical tenses – *imperfetto* (*si disperdeva*) and *presente* (*ristagna*) highlights the opposition between the present and the past. The first verb, borrowed from physics (as well as the word *collisione*) represents the past with clean water and fertile topsoil while the second verb is connected with the urban reality, concrete and poisonous puddles rather than earth. As well as the theme, the structure of this juxtaposition is similar to the description of the past and present in poem 4.

The verb ‘mancare’ occurs often in the Raboni’s lyric, since he is the poet of ‘mancanza’, wanting to be part of the past rather than an accomplice of the present. Therefore, one of the main themes in his lyric is death. The lyrical ‘I’ of Raboni seems to belong to the past, as claimed in the first line of ‘Sogno di via dei Serpenti’: ‘Morto, credo, e parente di morti’.³⁷⁵ The present is represented as a piece of history, already distanced from the poet.³⁷⁶ Pietro Bellocchio called Raboni’s viewpoint ‘un’ottica mortuaria’.³⁷⁷ Despite the fact that death is a recurrent theme in poetry in general, Raboni’s approach differs; he feels he is part of the past, placing himself among his ancestors, among dead people and creating a dialogue with them. Normally poets, when writing about death, create a distance between two realities, between the world of the dead and the world of the living. The vision of poets is usually directed from the present towards the past and, consequently, the dead world. Raboni’s temporal perspective is the

³⁷⁵ As Raboni tended to revise his poems (and translations), there are two versions of this poem, available in the Meridiani edition. See Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, pp. 514, 723.

³⁷⁶ Cf. Nicola Gardini writes about the importance of the annotations of poets and the architecture of the poem expressed through the graphic element on paper (and empty spaces as well). In addition, Gardini points out that from the moment the poem is written down on paper, it serves the needs of future scholarship, becoming an element of the past. The process of composing a poem (or writing in general) captures the imagination and fantasy of the author of the paper that become a piece of historical literary process as well: ‘La regola vuole che il poeta non conservi cose provvisorie, insufficienti, cose che avranno senso solo dopo. Quasi sempre, pertanto, per sapere come tutto iniziò dobbiamo affidarci ai suoi racconti di un’epoca successiva. Il poeta che narra la sua storia, però, non ci dà la storia, ma una ricostruzione, che, come vogliono le regole del ricordare, esclude il casuale e il circostanziale e non considera alcunché di ciò che non è in grado di richiamare alla memoria. Ecco perché le notazioni dei poeti sono preziose. Lì, se le parole non hanno subito aggiustamenti di un secondo tempo, troviamo una copia diretta del divenire; e quella copia è, come una decalcomania, tutt’uno con l’atto del muovere la penna, anzi: è quella penna, è quella carta; è ‘momento grafico’ in sé, *tempo salvato e trasportato nel futuro senza danni o aggiunte* [my emphasis]’. See Nicola Gardini, ‘La metamorfosi di Giudici’, *Il Sole 24 Ore Domenica*, 19 February 2016 <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/cultura/2016-02-19/la-metamorfosi-giudici--121448.shtml?uid=ACjwcDTC&fromSearch&refresh_ce=1> [accessed 14 August 2017].

³⁷⁷ Bellocchio.

other way round, namely from past to present; he feels he belongs more to the past and rejects accepting the present. He refers to the present through the lens of Manzoni, for example, or his ancestors.

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| <i>Niente di personale, ci mancherebbe altro!, nel restauro della fontana. L'acqua che sbalzata oltre i bordi dalla collisione degli scafi si disperdeva a poco a poco nel terriccio ristagna adesso sul selciato in piccole pozze velenose.</i> | N, R, A, pERsonale – REstauRO-altRO A, B D, S, P, R, dispERdeva-tERRiccio teRRiccio – RIstagna S, P, O, E, tErriCCIO-sElCIAto |
| <i>NieNte di peRsoNale, ci maNcheRebbe altRo!, NEl Restauro della foNtaNa. L'acqua che sBalzata oltre i Bordi dalla colliSione degli Scafi Si diSperdeva a poco a poco nel teRRiccio RIstagna adeSSo Sul Selciato in PiccOle POzze velenOse.</i> | |

Table 6. Prosody in PPT, poem 6

(7.)

Il traffico pedonale scorre da anni senza intralci sul piccolo ingorgo dei curiosi in espiatione davanti alla vetrina degli animali vivi. Vuoto com'era dopo il salto dell'acrobata peloso il trapezio oscilla inosservato a centinaia di millimetri d'altezza sulla giungla dei trucioli.

From the public gardens in Via Benedetto Marcello we move to the other side of Corso Buenos Aires and to the last of Raboni's houses, in Via Melzo, where he lived with Patrizia Valduga. The pet shop, mentioned in this prose poem is opposite Raboni's house on the other side of Via Melzo.³⁷⁸

The circulation of water in the fountain (poem 6) is transformed here into a flow of people. Here, the passer-by is not alone, as in poem 3, but with other people as in poem 2: *l'incalcolabile maggioranza degli esseri viventi* becomes *il traffico pedonale*. To the theme of crowd, a necessary element of the urban reality, there is added also a motif of walking – *passeggiata* – crucial for Raboni and discussed by Benjamin – *passages*.³⁷⁹ We see again the window, which this time belongs to a shop rather than a building. The masses in this poem can be divided

³⁷⁸ Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1684.

³⁷⁹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*.

into two groups, because here a pedestrian traffic jam and a crowd of strolling pedestrians are juxtaposed: the first one is represented by rushing passers-by (*traffico pedonale*) while the others incorporate the image of the flâneur (*un piccolo ingorgo dei curiosi*). Whereas the passer-by from poem 3 sometimes does not have time to look up, here flâneurs stop and are curious, attracted by a natural world (*animali vivi*), somehow alien to this urban flow. However, the common element with poem 3 is that no one raises their eyes to watch an intruder (*l'acrobata peloso*) because the trapeze is *inosservato*. The situation with the tightrope walker, who is alone and to whom no one pays attention, echoes in a certain way the situation with 'Le Vieux saltimbanque' from Baudelaire's *Le Spleen di Paris*. Baudelaire's protagonist - 'saltimbanque' (that is translated into English as 'a pitiful old clown' by Louise Varese,³⁸⁰ while the French word 'saltimbanque' could alternatively be translated as a 'street entertainer', or 'acrobat' – that we see in Raboni's poem), compared also with the writer, gave up and stopped dancing or performing, because even without him there was 'joy, money-making', 'everywhere frenetic outbursts of vitality'.³⁸¹ Raboni's poetic situation is more positive due to the fact that the trapeze is still swinging – the tightrope walker has stopped performing, but he is still working, he is not 'mute and motionless'³⁸² as an old clown. An empty trapeze and its vertical lines are compared to the horizontal line of the traffic and the traffic of pedestrians which *scorre da anni*. Live animals, the hairy acrobat, and the jungle are elements of a natural life that do not belong to city life – the same opposition of the past and the present, the old natural world and the new urban landscape. All elements of the natural world are suffering here (the same as for the trees trying to free their roots from the asphalt in poem 4) – the animals are behind the shop window, a product to be traded; no one is interested in the acrobat; the jungle is not real, but made up of wooden shavings. Splinters of words and drops of water, small pieces of the old 'real' world from poems 5 and 6 respectively, are transformed here in shavings (*trucioli*).

³⁸⁰ Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1970), pp. 25–27.

³⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 25–26.

³⁸² Ibid.

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| <i>Il traffico pedonale scorre da anni senza intralci sul piccolo ingorgo dei curiosi in espiazione davanti alla vetrina degli animali vivi. Vuoto com'era dopo il salto dell'acrobata peloso il trapezio oscilla inosservato a centinaia di millimetri d'altezza sulla giungla dei trucioli.</i> | TRaffico-TRuccioli O, IL TRAffico-INTRAlci, SCOrre- piCColo- CuRiOSi A, V V P, A A, I U, L |
| <i>IL TRaffico pedonale scoRRe da anni senza InTRalci sul piccolo ingorgo dei curiosi in espiazione dAVAnti ALLA VetrinA degli AnimAli ViVi. Vuoto com'era dopo il sAlto dell'AcrobAtA peloso il trApezio oscilla inosservato a centinaia di millimetri d'altezza sulla giungla dei trucioli.</i> | |

Table 7. Prosody in PPT, poem 7

(8.)

Profonda come la caverna di Polifemo è accecata ora come Polifemo la galleria dove il cinema ha smesso di risplendere della scricchiolante infinità delle sue viscere. Più ancora nelle tenebre inebriava il loro appressarsi nel silenzio della cassiera quietamente in coma su un fascicolo di Bolero, nella loschezza della maschera rediviva l'impercettibile istante d'un borbottio per uncinare il biglietto con la sua mano di cuoio.

Similar to the detailed description in poem 6 of the fountain's mechanism that doesn't work properly, the author portrays a former cinema, another element of the past ('ghost in the city' using the aforementioned term by Certeau)³⁸³ that no longer projects films (*ha smesso di risplendere*). Raboni remembers the times when the cinema was full of magic, embodying a door to another world with its dark halls (*sale buie*) and creaking projection reels. In fact, he was more interested in this magic and fascinating atmosphere than in the film itself:

Ricordi di molti anni fa, quando il cinema era ancora pieno di magia. Mi ci portava il fascino delle sale buie, di quegli antri misteriosi dagli impiantiti scricchiolanti, con gli enormi portoni che introducevano a chiesa quale incontro. In fondo, confesso, ci andavo indipendentemente da quello che avrei visto sullo schermo.³⁸⁴

Raboni is attracted by the cinema and goes there in order just to enjoy the feeling of magic and liberation, no matter what film is projected. Raboni often writes

³⁸³ Certeau and Giard.

³⁸⁴ Raboni in Ranieri Polese, *Il film della mia vita* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1995), pp. 79–87 (pp. 81–82).

about cinema in his poems (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4). In fact, this atmosphere of ‘sale buie’ and ‘antri misteriosi’ represents a ‘non-place’ according to Augé,³⁸⁵ an element of supermodernity:

[A] person entering the space of non-place is relieved of his usual determinants. He becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role of passenger, customer or driver. Perhaps he is still weighed down by the previous day’s worries, the next day’s concerns; but he is distanced from them temporarily by the environment of the moment. Subjected to a gentle form of possession, to which he surrenders himself with more or less talent or conviction, he tastes for a while – like anyone who is possessed – the passive joys of identity-loss, and the more active pleasure of role-playing.³⁸⁶

Even if Raboni belongs rather to the period of modernity, because he cherishes the old and the new: his writings create the dialogue between the present and the past. Following Baudelaire’s metropolitan tradition, however, Raboni includes some elements of supermodernity; therefore Augé’s prism sheds new light to the elements of cityscape in Raboni’s work.

The cinema that Raboni describes has autobiographical connotations. It was the cinema *il Puccini* in Corso Buenos Aires: ‘Me ne ricordo uno in particolare: era il Puccini di corso Buenos Aires, a Milano. È chiuso ormai da tanto tempo, e il suo ingresso si spalanca senza più senso sui marciapiedi di quella grande strada intorno a cui ho trascorso gran parte della mia vita’.³⁸⁷ In fact, Raboni feels sad even remembering because there is no longer a cinema. Moreover, he draws attention to the pointlessness of having doors and an entrance when they no longer lead anywhere. Raboni regrets the absence of this cinema, as he would mourn the loss of an old friend.

Thus, the cinema in the *poème en prose* is personified. It has an eye and a body with internal organs. The process of showing a movie, using projection reels, is compared to the intestines of a body.³⁸⁸ Furthermore the cinema is not just

³⁸⁵ Augé, p. 94.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 103.

³⁸⁷ Raboni in Ranieri Polese, in *Il film della mia vita*, cit., pp. 81–82.

³⁸⁸ Here we can draw a parallel with two trends in Russian Formalism. First, the morphological metaphors and the use of the biological organism as a model for their approach. Second, the image used often by Viktor Shklovsky, the founder of Russian Formalism, is the ‘technological trend’. Shklovsky suggested that literary scholars look at an artistic text the way a mechanic studies a car. See Shklovsky, *Tekhnika pisatel'skogo remesla* = *The Technique of the Writer's Trade* (Moscow, Leningrad: Molodaya Gvardiya, 1927). Peter Steiner explains the use of the ‘mechanical metaphors’ by Russian Formalists not only through the connections with Italian Futurism, but also due to a specific Russian contexts: ‘The source of Shklovskiy technological metaphor is rather complex. It betrays first the influence of Italian Futurism, with its cult of the machine as the most crucial factor in the birth of the modernist artistic sensibility. But in Russia it

personified but also imbued with magic. Raboni goes beyond comparison with something familiar, linking it to a mythical character and a personal tragedy. With reference to blind Cyclops, the author prefers to take us to ancient Greek mythology instead of today's reality.

The reader sympathises even more with the personification of the old cinema because it is juxtaposed with two 'unpersonified' people in the text. The first is a cashier, who is asleep, almost in coma. The word 'silenzio', the same as used in poem 5 representing life and the conversation of the deaf-mutes, here is contrasted with the squeaky and creaky sounds of the cinema projection reels. Two other words, 'quietamente' and 'in coma' highlight the stillness. The poetic description, with the lexis from high register (*tenebre*, the substantivised highly poetic verb – *il loro appressarsi*), the sophisticated use of the verb *inebriava* (transitive instead of intransitive common usage), given at the beginning of the phrase highlight a miserable cashier, who falls asleep over a cheap magazine, *Bolero*. The sentence continues introducing the second person, who does not seem alive either. Firstly, he has some kind of disability, linked to his vision and speech and secondly, he wears a glove with a hook with which to punch tickets before people enter the cinema. However, the author writes that this is not just a glove but also a 'leather hand', so he appears like a robot, lacking any human senses. In Raboni's cinema non-place, not just customers/spectators lose their identity, but even people who work there also become de-humanized. (See more about cinema in Raboni's works in Section 3.4.)

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Profonda come la caverna di Polifemo è acceccata ora come Polifemo la galleria dove il cinema ha smesso di risplendere della scricchiolante infinità delle sue viscere.</i> | <i>P, R, F, K, O K, L, A, O S, M, E S, N, I coME-PolifEMo-coME-PolifEMo- cinEMa-sMEsso</i> |
| <i>Più ancora nelle tenebre inebriava il loro appressarsi nel silenzio della</i> | <i>P, B, R, E S, L, A U, O QUetamente –COMa-fasciCOlo</i> |

also indicated a certain political stance. It was related to the leftist intelligentsia's yearning for a radical transformation of Russian society. The mastery of technology was often seen as the ultimate means to this end'. See Peter Steiner, *Russian Formalism: A Metapoetics* (London, UK: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 46.

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>cassiera quietamente in coma su un fascicolo di Bolero, nella loschezza della maschera rediviva l'impercettibile istante</i> <i>d'un borbottio per uncinare il biglietto con la sua mano di cuoio.</i> | <i>L, S, loSCHEzza-maSCHEra</i> <i>R, P, E, B, maschERa-REdiviva-impERCettibile</i> <i>I, B, impercettibile –uncinare impercettiBILE- BIGLIETTO</i> |
| <i>ProFOnda Come la CAverna di POLiFemO è AcceCCAta OrA cOme POLiFemO la galleria dove il cinema ha smesso di RISplendere della SCRicchiolaNte INfINITà delle sue viscere. Più ancora nELLE tENEBRE iNEBRIava il loro aPPReSSaRSI nel Silenzio della caSSIera Quietamente in COma su un fasciCOlo di Bolero, nella loSCHEzza della maSCHEra rediviva l'ImpercettIBile Istante d'un BOrBOttio per uncinare il Biglietto COn la sua mano di CUoio.</i> | |

Table 8. Prosody in PPT, poem 8

(9.)

*Nei protocolli dello spostamento figura anche la certezza di riattraversarlo
un'ultima volta, il corso
senza aspettare il verde del semaforo
e con la lentezza più suggerita che imposta dalla conclusiva unicità dell'evento
avendo per meta l'humilitas che splende sul pavimento di pietra nella fragranza
composta dell'incenso e della cera.*

The last poem in prose takes us back to the theme of the first piece, the motif of moving and crossing. (The same subject matter and technique of circular structure is used as we see in Raboni's other poem, 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere'.) Poem 9 consists of four lines of differing lengths, like a poem, and is therefore an example of the transition from prose to poetry. It is interesting to refer again to Lotman and to his idea of boundaries between the prose text and the verse. According to Lotman historically the verse preceeded artistic prose text: 'History testifies that poetic speech (as well as singing or chanting) was initially the only possible speech of verbal *art*. First came the "dissimilation" of the language, its separation from ordinary speech; only later came the "assimilation". Out of "dissimilated", already radically different material, a picture of reality was created'.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁹ Yuri M. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, Michigan Slavic Contributions ([n.p.]: University of Michigan, 1977), p. 94.

In addition, Raboni's journalistic articles, or essays about Milan for guide books, analysed earlier, illustrate the ability of the poet to adapt the text stylistically according to the audience. The absence of a border between poetic discourse and prose by Lotman can be applied to Raboni's *poèmes en prose*, in particular to the last poem, when the verse is mixed with poetic prose lines:

Thus artistic prose arose against the background of a poetic system as the negation of that system. || This permits us to look dialectically at the problem of the borders of poetry and prose and the aesthetic nature of such marginal forms as vers libre. In this connection we cannot help but notice the following paradox. The view that poetry and prose are independent, isolated constructions which can be described without mutual correlation ('Poetry is rhythmically organized speech, prose is ordinary speech'), unexpectedly leads the scholar to a position in which he cannot delimit these phenomena. After encountering a mass of intermediate forms, he is obliged to conclude that one cannot draw a definite line between poetry and prose.³⁹⁰

The final words in poems are usually more powerful. Here the words at the end of the first three lines are related to movement (*riattraversarlo, il corso, semaforo*) and the last three lines depict church and death (*unicità dell'evento, fragranza, della cera*). Thus, apart from movement and crossing, the main subject matter here is death.

This poem is similar to a piece of prose that Raboni wrote in 1968, 'Partendo da boulevard Berthier' from *Cadenza d'inganno*, where the reader accompanies the author to the funeral of a French student, Gilles Tautin, who died on 10 June 1968. The story is the protagonist's stream of consciousness reflected in the use of very long phrases and extended timeline. Only at the end does the reader understand what is actually happening. In the last two lines there are key words, 'bara' and 'annegato'. Similarly in poem 9 there are references to the funeral with the introduction of words such as *l'humilitas* written on the stones of the church floor – a reference also to Manzoni, the Lazzaretto, and the smell of incense and wax experienced in church.

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Nei protocolli dello spostamento figura anche la certezza di riattraversarlo un'ultima volta, il corso</i> | <i>R, P, K, O R, A pROtoCOLli – sPOstamento- CORso S, E, syllable SE</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p.101.

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><i>senza aspettare il verde del semaforo</i></p> <p><i>e con la lentezza più suggerita che imposta dalla conclusiva unicità dell'evento</i></p> <p><i>avendo per meta l'humilitas che splende sul pavimento di pietra nella fragranza composta dell'incenso e della cera.</i></p> | <p><i>L, K, U, syllable CON</i> <i>CON-CONclusiva</i></p> <p><i>M, MEta-huMilitas-pavIMento</i> <i>P, R, N, avendo-pavimento</i> <i>inCEnso-CEra</i></p> |
| <p><i>Nei prOTOcOlli dello SPOSTamenTO figuRa anche la CERtezza dI RIattRAveRsARlo un'ultima volta, il corso</i> <i>SEnza aspettare il verde del SEmaforo</i> <i>e con la lentezza più suggerita che imposta dalla conclusiva unicità dell'evento</i> <i>avendo per METa l'huMiliTas che sPlende sul PavIMEnTo di PieTra nella fragranza [comPosta dell'inCEnso e della CEra.</i></p> | |

Table 9. Prosody in PPT, poem 9

To summarise, PPT sits in the central section of *Ogni terzo pensiero*. It consists of nine short prose poems, which have the circular thematic structure mentioned by Zucco.³⁹¹ The first and the last poems speak about the crossing of the *Corso*: Raboni recaps his life journey in the first one while in the last short poem he speaks about his 'last crossing' of the *Corso* leading to death. The second and the third poems refer to Raboni's childhood home at 53 Via San Gregorio. In the second text we read about the history of the building opposite Raboni's house. In the third poem the same topic of the building's history continues along with another house in the same street (40 Via San Gregorio). The author reflects on the relationship between the past and the future starting with a visual description of the building, its bricks and windows. The fourth and the sixth poems depict the opposition of the natural world to the city reality. We see how the trees suffer under the asphalt and how the water in the fountain stops circulating. In the fifth

³⁹¹ 'Collocata al centro del libro, la *Piccola passeggiata trionfale* richiama nelle due prose liminari il paradigma tematico enunciato dall'epigrafe shakespeariana, ponendosi come esito narrativo (la passeggiata che segna la vittoria, per quanto momentanea, sulla malattia: dunque per questo, forse, ironicamente *trionfale*) dei *Sonetti di infermità e convalescenza*, e come premessa all'alternanza del tema della morte (e dei morti) con quello 'civile' negli *Altri sonnetti*'. See Zucco in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1683.

prose poem the poet speculates that God prefers the deaf-mute. The seventh poem describes the variety of shops and places of entertainment in this area, while the eighth poem focuses on the memories of a small cinema frequented by the protagonist.

The style of the prose poems is complex. Each includes a maximum of one, two, or three sentences. The first includes three sentences, while the majority consist of only two long sentences, or even one long phrase (poems 3 and 9). Even though poem 3 consists of one sentence, it is the longest. This one sentence, highly charged with meaning, is difficult for the reader to understand, as Raboni uses neither commas nor other punctuation in order not to break the flow of the sentence.

By comparison, there are two attempts to mix these long eloquent phrases with prosaic constructions. In poem 2, the use of brackets breaks the flow of the sentence and forces us to reread the beginning of the sentence in order to understand it: *Ma la differenza rimane e non è priva di rapporto (anche se è molto difficile dire di quale rapporto si tratti) con il moto dei corpi celesti e con il funzionamento della mia valvola mitrale.*

After having read the explanation in brackets, the reader must go back to find the main word 'rapporto' which relates to the rest of the sentence, continuing with the preposition 'con'. The use of this bracket structure, which separates the main word from both preposition and the object, is the same as used by Raboni in his poem 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere'. The poetic discourse of the poem on one hand seems fluid, but is often interrupted by different techniques, for example by *enjambement*, where Raboni does the same thing: splitting a dependent in the sentence from the main word and often starting the line of the poem with a preposition.

The second example of breaking the flow of a phrase is found in the beginning of poem 6, where Raboni uses an exclamation mark to change the intonation, introducing a colloquial expression 'ci mancherebbe altro!'

Poem 9 has a particular structure, because although it is one sentence, it is written partly like prose and partly like a poem. After three words ('il corso', 'del semaforo' and 'dell'evento') Raboni leaves space as if it were a poem of four lines but of very different lengths.

PPT is a complex text, with references to Raboni's biography and the history of Milan, arising through the district of Porta Venezia. Without a good knowledge of Raboni's life it is difficult to grasp the meaning of these long sentences. The musicality of the prosody often triggers Raboni into choosing words and tying them together, so that the incomprehensible metaphorical discourse starts to make sense. Raboni intimates to us how to decipher the meaning of the texts, by analysing them and looking into them through the prism of his entire work. So we see how a demanding author builds a relationship with his reader (in the same way that Raboni encouraged study of all five editions of his translations and not just one). He often refers to the reader, including him in his discourse, using the first person plural verb form, inserting different forms of address and using colloquial expression and lexis. But he also combines everyday structures and vocabulary with lexis from a high register, using very subjective situations and describing them in long sentences without punctuation, making the discourse difficult to understand.

2.3. A Critical analysis of Raboni's 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere'

2.3.1 The structure of *Quare tristis* and of the poem 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere'

'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere' (NOOC) is the final poem from one of Raboni's last collections *Quare tristis* (1998). *Quare tristis* consists of four parts: nineteen sonnets with a Petrarchan rhyming scheme, five poems 'Stanze per la musica di Adriano Guarnieri', twenty six sonnets with a Shakespearean rhyming scheme (plus one poem of two stanzas), and the poem NOOC.

The first section is an extension from Raboni's previous collection *Ogni terzo pensiero* (1993), where he uses the Italian sonnet form and chooses constraints as opposed to free verse. Although Raboni sporadically used the sonnet form in his early poetry, after the collection *Ogni terzo pensiero*, where the sonnet form is

most prevalent, critics described him as ‘l’ultimo dei classici’.³⁹² The discourse in the sonnet is dependent on the sonnet scheme chosen by Raboni³⁹³. He sees the Italian sonnet form (4+4+3+3) and the English sonnet form (4+4+4+2) as two distinct forms. The different composition of the last six lines, two tercets or one quatrain and a couplet, provides the distinct architecture of the poem. By contrast, the discourse in the Shakespearean form develops differently, allowing the use of the distich at the end:

Non saprei spiegare perché ho alternato un po’ queste due forme di sonetto, però sono per me molto diverse, nel senso che proprio la sentenziosità del distico finale mi comporta un altro tipo di discorso, un altro modo di affrontare il tema, di svolgerlo, persino forse un altro tipo di moralità, non so come dire...è stata un’esperienza interessante lavorare su questa variazione che sembra minima, ma è fondamentale, perché il discorso prende un altro ritmo o un’altra strada.³⁹⁴

Quare tristis contains a section entitled ‘Stanze per la musica di Adriano Guarnieri’, written for a composer and the oratory held in Venice in 1998. The musicality of these poems, played with music during ‘messa laica’,³⁹⁵ was therefore crucial for Raboni. The five stanzas written in free verse, without any formal constraints, are organized in a particular way and thus have a rationalised structure: hendecasyllabic, nine-syllable and seven-syllable verses make up a particular hourglass structure with stress on its musicality. When writing these stanzas for music it was essential for Raboni to facilitate movement without impeding the fluidity of the music. The architectonic feature of these five poems is reflected in their hourglass (mirror symmetrical) composition (‘a clessidra’):³⁹⁶ fifteen lines - five lines - ten lines - five lines - fifteen lines. This music-oriented characteristic of the collection of mostly sonnets is seen also in the title, for *Quare tristis* is a quotation from Psalm 42. References to religion and Raboni’s

³⁹² Cordelli, ‘Raboni l’ultimo dei classici’. However, many critics notice the tendency of Italian poets in the second half of the last century to use the sonnet form. For example, see the article about the return to closed forms by Caserza, who as well as such poets as Zanzotto, Raboni, Valduga, and Sanguineti, mentions the younger poets such as Marco Berisso, Gabriele Frasca, Lorenzo Durante, Riccardo Held, Giacomo Trinci, and Roberto Piumini. See Guido Caserza, ‘A Few Considerations on “Closed Form” in Contemporary Italian Poetry’, *Chicago Review*, 56.1 (2011), 182-187.

³⁹³ Tamiozzo Goldman, ‘Scrittori contemporanei. Interviste a Sandra Petrigiani, Giovanni Raboni, Gianni Celati’, pp. 315–316.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 1719.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

Catholic upbringing are always present in his work, as shown in lines 50-51 of NOOC: ‘cominciai a pregare | come faccio ancora, e sempre in latino’.

The final section of the collection consists of one 99-line poem. It is not written in the fixed verse form of a sonnet, nor does it have a specific rhyming scheme, although all lines are written in hendecasyllable: ‘Alla fine ci sono questi sciolti, 99 endecassillabi sciolti, che considero un po’ l’ultima mia esperienza, tengono il posto della prosa, in qualche modo, però con una possibilità di espansione fantastica maggiore’.³⁹⁷

The protagonist takes the reader on a walk through Raboni’s favourite area of Milan, near busy Corso Buenos Aires (‘il corso brullicava | di commerci frenetici e ingannevoli’), the ruins of the Lazzaretto reminding him of the time in 1630, when Milan was in the grip of the Great Plague, ‘un tempo del famoso flagello’, as described by Manzoni. From the enclosure where the sick people were housed, around the church of San Carlino, the reader emerges into the post Second World War period. During these years of Raboni’s adolescence, the protagonist used to go to a small secret place for protection, the darkness of a pornographic cinema.

The author combines different epochs and different spaces through his memory and imagination. The ruins of the Lazzaretto and the church of San Carlino trigger in Raboni the thought of invisible history in a visible city.³⁹⁸ As stated in Chapter 1, Raboni describes the construction of the Lazzaretto in minute detail and, as we have seen, he writes about its history in one of his articles.³⁹⁹ He even personified the Lazzaretto: ‘Dopo questi terribili exploits la peste, per fortuna, esce di scena e il Lazzaretto va “in pensione”. In termini più realistici, comincia la sua agonia’.⁴⁰⁰ The author draws a parallel between his personal sorrow and disasters and the marvellous survival of those quarantined inside the Lazzaretto. The enclosure of the Lazzaretto, the darkness of the cinema, dusk and motion are all associated with a safe, protected place. At the end of the poem he rejects any

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Raboni is interested in the historical layer and ‘reconstruction’ of the invisible city, not a pure imagination, or a fantastic city as in writings by Calvino, for example. See Elio Baldi, ‘Cit(t)a(re) Calvino. Le città invisibili e gli architetti’, *Doppiozero*, 14 September 2014, <<http://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/calvino-trentanni-dopo/cit-t-re-calvino-le-citta-invisibili-e-gli-architetti>> [accessed 20 September 2017].

³⁹⁹ Giovanni Raboni, ‘La peste e il suo Lazzaretto’.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

similarities between the history of man and his own life and continues his journey, just as water flows in a wide river.

Since the poem NOOC is placed in the last part of the book, the author ends the collection with its final verses. He turns and disappears, but it is not the end, because he continues his movement: ‘Meglio | muoversi, affrettare l’incerto passo | prima che la cenere solidifichi | alla volta del gran fiume imminente | e li svoltare, perdersi, svanire’.

Giudici defined this poem NOOC by Raboni as a *mini-recherche* and summarised the main features of the poem in his review of *Quare tristis*:

Lungo, straordinario e inatteso recitativo finale: *una mini-recherche*, oserei suggerire, dove sullo sfondo di una milanese Porta Venezia di altri tempi troviamo il poeta adolescente che, marinando il suo liceo, si rifugia nel complice buio di un ‘cinemino da puttane’ che è adesso un supermarket.⁴⁰¹

Apart from the architectonic construction of the collection, the internal structure of the poem NOOC reveals its rich, sharp and engaging prosody (‘una superscaltrita e coinvolgente prosodia’).⁴⁰² The stress on musicality and constant attention to the phonetic component of the poem are reinforced here also by syntax and *enjambements* (‘continui e serrati *enjambements*’).⁴⁰³ Raboni does not help the reader to understand the context, and the poem demands several readings. He doesn’t use punctuation to facilitate its comprehension, but rather uses it to emphasise singular words. He often creates a pause between two connected words, where the pause should not be. For example:

| | | |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| L.1 | Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere | By separating the expression ‘l’ora della cenere’, the opening line of the poem has more weight, attracting more attention. In addition, a special effect lies in the alliteration and assonance of ‘ora’ and ‘ormai’. |
| Ll. 8-11 | di mattoni color sangue, avviliti ora, loro, da miasmi micidiali più dell’intero un tempo dal [famoso flagello di cui si legge nei libri | The pauses after ‘ora’ and after ‘loro’ emphasise the words ‘miasmi micidiali’. A potential comma after ‘un tempo’ is omitted in order to continue the flow, as well as the use of <i>enjambements</i> . |
| Ll.21- | e pensai che lui, sì, non gli | The pause in-between the |

⁴⁰¹ Giudici, ‘L’immaginario come liturgia’.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 23 | [spagnoli ci aveva ammassati lì come [agnelli per sterminarci. Che colpe, le [stesse | alliteration of sound ‘l’ and the assonance of ‘i’ makes the word ‘lui’ very powerful. |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Table 10. Elements of syntax in NOOC

Raboni uses this particular syntax, long phrases, and frequent *enjambements*, because the poem also strives to create an impression of movement. He describes a life journey. In addition, stylistically the long complicated phrases recall the prose of Proust, noted also by Giudici.⁴⁰⁴ Although NOOC is a long poem of 99 lines, there are only twelve sentences. So the average sentence is about 8.25 lines. If we split each sentences into lines, we can see, that:

| Each sentence (ll. ...) contains | Number of lines |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1-23 | 23 |
| 23-37 | 15 |
| 37-46 | 10 |
| 46-54 | 9 |
| 54-56 | 3 |
| 56-65 | 10 |
| 65-67 | 3 |
| 68-73 | 6 |
| 73-83 | 11 |
| 83-87 | 5 |
| 87-95 | 13 |
| 95-99 | 5 |

Table 11. The lengths of sentences in NOOC

A long opening phrase is contrasted with two short sentences (ll. 54-56 and ll. 65-67). The first short phrase is further broken down by commas: ‘Ma perché, | mi chiedo, già allora, se erano ancora | tutti vivi?’

The sentence in the form of a question, to which the author replies, is a technique that Raboni often uses. It is not dialogue, but a dramatic monologue. (Similarly, at the end of the poem ‘Risanamento’ (see Chapter 4), Raboni asks his dead father a question, and then provides the answer he would have received from him).⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ Giudici.

⁴⁰⁵ Éanna Ó Ceallacháin provides comments in his critical anthology of Italian poetry for Raboni’s poem ‘Risanamento’. He points out several recurrences in this poem of ‘prosaic tone’, comparing the poem with ‘a conversation already under way’. See *Twentieth-Century Italian*

The second short sentence in the poem also has a special stress: ‘Incredibile: c’erano | altri sconvolgimenti, altre catastrofi | oltre quelli delle mie inadempienze!’ The adjective ‘incredibile’ is preceded by suspension marks (...) and followed by a colon in order to introduce an explanation, which also divides the sentence. Thus, we have the adjective emphasised on both sides. In addition, this adjective can be considered to be twice stressed, owing to the negative prefix IN- that Raboni tends to use. Other words with the prefix IN- in this poem are: ‘commerci frenetici e INgannevoli’; ‘INvisibilmente’; ‘INvisibili bastioni’; ‘INGinocchiato’; ‘m’INchiodano’; ‘amore INfinito’; ‘IMpudenza’; ‘INadempienze’; ‘INconsapevole’; ‘monumento INvisibile’; ‘l’infanzia INterminata’.

There are another two short sentences at the end of the poem. The first one (lines 83-87), also splits into smaller units and is relatively short. The second and last short sentence is found at lines 95-99: ‘Meglio | muoversi, affrettare l’incerto passo | prima che la cenere solidifichi | alla volta del gran fiume imminente | e li svoltare, perdersi, svanire’.

In the final phrase three commas divide the discourse like the last chords of a piece of music. These three commas and the pause after the space marker ‘li’ break the line into small fractions, into four parts, so that the poem itself dissolves, melts into the air, ‘svanisce’. The lyrical hero turns and is hidden behind the horizon, the reader unable to see him anymore, or maybe the reader goes away with him.

The poem begins with the metaphor of ‘cenere’ that could mean dusk, because it is also collocated with time (‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’).⁴⁰⁶ Raboni had already used ‘cenere’ as an indicator of the afternoon in the other two poems, ‘Anima’ (‘crepuscolo incenerisce’)⁴⁰⁷ and ‘La casa di campagna’ (‘La casa di campagna dove leggere | George Eliot o E.M. Forster fino all’ora | della cenere’).⁴⁰⁸ ‘Cenere’ in the sense of cremation is related also to death and its semantic field, which include other words from NOOC (‘sterminarci’; ‘sono nato

Poetry: A Critical Anthology (1900 to the Neo-Avantgarde), ed. by Éanna Ó Ceallacháin, Italian Studies Series (Leicester: Troubador, 2007), p. 219.

⁴⁰⁶ The metaphor from the first line of the poem – ‘Nell’ora della cenere’ is also the title of the collection of a big body of Raboni’s poems published posthumously in 2012.

⁴⁰⁷ Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 91.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 959.

e morto e risuscitato'; 'reliquie della strage'; 'erano ancora tutti vivi'; 'l'impudenza | di morire me vivo'; 'l'onta | della morte'; 'superstiti della peste'; 'morti | portati via a carrettate, sepolti | come viene in qualche foppone'; 'macerie'). 'Cenere' could also be related to the age of the poet in 1998, for when *Quare tristis* was published, Raboni was sixty-six years old. He writes about Porta Venezia, the district where he 'was born and died and resurrected several times' and death is one of the main themes of Raboni's lyric throughout his life.

The poem starts with the protagonist stating the time, dusk, and describing Corso Buenos Aires, for Raboni, the main 'Corso' in Milan. This is a street full of shops and people ('il corso brulicava | di commerci frenetici e ingannevoli | e di delitti consumati in sogno'). The author then suggests a journey with the reader through different physical places and symbols personal to him during the different stages of his life, but mostly during his adolescence. The relationship with the reader is very intimate, similar to a confession, in that he refers to things about which he was unable to speak with his parents. As has been noticed already from my analysis of poem 6 in PPT, Raboni inserts colloquial expressions in NOOC also, ('s'intende', 'ma non anticipiamo'), asking or anticipating the reaction from the reader and guiding him, so that a certain secret understanding is created between the protagonist and his fellow reader traveller.

At the end of the poem the author pushes us forward before the ashes become solid: the metaphor of 'cenere' creating an effect of circular structure. We turn, and disappear with the flow of the river, which is Corso Buenos Aires. The link to a metaphor of movement as a perpetual cycle is also inside the poem, lines 25-27: 'dove tante volte | sono nato e morto e resuscitato | da perderne il conto'.

This constant movement is further revealed through the choice of words of motion used throughout the whole poem: 'a pochi passi il corso brulicava' (2); 'commerci frenetici' (3); 'avviliti' (8); 'stavo strisciando' (34); 'se ci andavo | così spesso' (38-39); 'aspettando | che quel buio tornasse' (48-49); 'l'onta | della morte si sarebbe abbattuta | di schianto, subdolamente, nel giro | di pochissimi anni' (61-64); 'Ma non anticipiamo' (68); 'come uscirne | senza strangolarmi' (72-73); 'morti | portati via a carrettate' (85); 'muoversi, affrettare l'incerto passo' (96); 'e lì svoltare, perdersi, svanire' (99).

2.3.2 Time and space in the poem ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’

There are several references to different layers of the past in the poem. The first period is placed in the period of the Great Plague in Milan (1629-1631), depicted also by Manzoni in *I promessi sposi*.⁴⁰⁹ In lines 7-8: “cinque camini e sei finestre in tutto | di mattoni color sangue, avviliti | ora...”, Raboni vividly describes the part played by the Lazzaretto that still exists in Milan.

The second period refers to the protagonist’s adolescence, when he used to abscond from school. Instead of going to classes at 10.00 or 10.30 am, he went to the cinema to watch erotic films (35-54; 69-73). With the first mention of this cinema (‘cinemino’) we are given a precise time marker, because the protagonist pays with *amlire*, the currency used in Italy during and after the Second World War, from 1943 until June 1950. The other time marker links to the specific high schools Raboni attended, namely, *il Parini* and *il Carducci* (line 41), the former attended between 1945 and 1948 and the latter attended between 1948 and 1950.

Another biographical reference, in lines 61-65: ‘e invece l’onta | della morte si sarebbe abbattuta | di schianto, subdolamente, nel giro | di pochissimi anni sul decoro | della famiglia...’, is the death of both Raboni’s father (in 1952) and mother (1953).

Then we are brought 50 years forward (73-75) from the protagonist’s adolescence into the present tense and time. Some present tense verbs can be assigned to the protagonist, for example in lines 50-54: ‘cominciai a pregare | come faccio ancora, e sempre in latino, | ogni volta che per troppo silenzio | o troppa luce il cuore si contorce | ignominiosamente’. The present tense can also be related to the reader (38, 55, 68, 75), creating the effect of a secret plot between writer and reader.

⁴⁰⁹ An interesting fact that the book of *The Betrothed* includes also maps of narration: ‘Northern and Central Italy c.1630’ and ‘Enlargement of marked area showing principal places mentioned in *The Betrothed*’. See Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed: and History of the Column of Infamy*, ed. by David Forgacs and Matthew Reynolds (London: Dent, 1997), pp. xxxvi–xxxvii. Another English translation of Manzoni’s novel, by Bruce Penman, includes one map accompanied with one page of ‘Geographical notes’ that divided into three sections ‘The Area around Lecco’, ‘Renzo’s escape route from Milan to the District of Bergamo’ and ‘The Imperial Army’s March on Mantua’. See Manzoni, Alessandro, *The Betrothed*, ed. by Bruce Penman (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

Sometimes, paradoxically, the use in the poem of verbs in *presente indicativo* could describe events that happened in the seventeenth century during the Great Plague ('si legge nei libri', 11), but the next line uses a verb in *passato remoto* ('considerai') assigned to the protagonist with whom, and alongside, we are making our journey.

Other examples of the grammatical tenses occur in the poem NOOC: *imperfetto indicativo* and *imperfetto congiuntivo* (brulicava – 2, aveva – 16, premevo gli occhi – 18, andavo – 29, rivedevo – 30, stavo strisciando – 34, ci andavo – 38, pensavano – 40, che fossi – 41, era – 41, tornasse – 49, erano vivi – 56, era – 58, succedesse – 59, avesse – 60, c'erano – 65, ero – 69); *passato remoto* (considerai – 12, pensai – 21, fu – 47, cominciai a pregare – 50); *trapassato prossimo* (ci aveva ammassati lì – 22); *presente* (si legge nei libri – 11, m'inchiodano – 24, s'intende – 38, faccio ancora – 51, si contorce – 53, mi chiedo – 55, rispondo – 56, ha – 57, non può sventare – 57-58, ma non anticipiamo – 68, può comprovare – 75, se so – 76, non so ancora – 78, credo – 79, stia – 89, se n'ha abbastanza – 89, solidifichi – 97), *passato prossimo* (sono nato e morto e risuscitato – 26, sia stato – 80), *condizionale semplice* (potrei giurarlo – 46), *condizionale passato* (si sarebbe abbattuta – 62).

The Lazzaretto of the past (6-17, 31-32) is compared to a small cinema where adult films were shown: 'un altro luogo | d'abominio e salvezza, un cinemino | di puttane a poco prezzo da poco | redento in supermarket' (34-37). The author prays in the cinema just as those infected by the plague prayed in San Carlino, in the centre of the Lazzaretto (16). He was ashamed of being in this 'cinemino': 'il cuore si contorce | ignominiosamente' (53-54). We see how as a teenager he develops and matures as he tries to leave the comfort of the cinema: 'un feto | dentro il ventre materno e come uscirne | senza strangolarmi' (71-73). The cinema is like a mother's womb, a dark and safe place, but a place where one can only stay for a limited time, because the child inevitably must leave his mother's womb. For Raboni the significant event, forcing him to mature was, first the death of his father and then his mother.

The lexis related to space and place in the poem is: 'a pochi passi il corso brulicava' (2); 'di quel che resta | d'un antico ricetta di sventure, | cinque camini e sei finestre in tutto | di mattoni color sangue, avviliti | ora' (5-9); 'l'immensa prateria purgatoriale | che da quella fronte invisibilmente | sin quasi agli invisibili

bastioni | aveva per suo centro San Carlino’ (13-16); ‘Che colpe, le stesse | o altre
m’inchiodano bolgia a bolgia | a questo rione’ (23-25); ‘le reliquie | della strage,
sul medesimo lato | di quella fenditura di mannaia’ (31-33); ‘un cinemino | di
puttane a poco prezzo da poco | redento in supermarket’ (35-37); il Parini, il
Carducci (41); ‘nel buio scricchiolante | del cinema Modena’ (70-71); ‘sepolti |
come viene in qualche foppone, all’ombra | d’un filare di gelsi’(85-87); ‘l’ospite |
del cinema-fantasma’ (87-88); ‘dei santi | di quelle sante macerie, quei ruderi |
d’un’antica misericordia’ (91-93); ‘la volta del gran fiume imminente’ (98).

2.3.3. Musicality and prosody of the poem ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’

Many critics including Magro, Zucco and Di Franza noted Raboni’s specific use of syntax.⁴¹⁰ However, the poet also uses another technique in order to make the structure of the poem fluid. Raboni joins lines not only by using *enjambement*, but also within this collocation by repeating the same sound, binding two lines with prosody. He often uses words with similar sounds through alliteration or assonance, in order to link the last word in the line to the first word of the following line (lines 7-8, 10-11, 12-13, 39-40, 41-42, 43-44, 44-45, 45-46, 47-48, 56-57, 60-61, 64-65, 71-72, 74-75, 76-77, 78-79). The table below (Table 12) provides some examples of these sound-connectors:

| | | Binding sounds |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------|
| cinque camini e sei finestre in TuTTO di maTTONi cOlOr sangue, avviliti | 7 8 | TO |
| più dell’intero un tempo dAL FAmoso FLAgeLLO di cui si legge nei libri | 10 11 | FLA |

⁴¹⁰ Fabio Magro, ‘Poesia in forma di prigioniero. Sul sonetto di Giovanni Raboni’, *Studi Novecenteschi*, 34.73 (2007), 209–42; Fabio Magro, ‘Raboni e l’amor cortese. Esercizi di *trobar clus*’, *Per leggere*, 31 (2016), 133–50; Rodolfo Zucco, ‘Qualche appunto per l’edizione e il commento di “A tanto caro sangue” di Giovanni Raboni’, *Cuadernos de Filología Italiana*, 12 (2005), 103–21; Concetta Di Franza, ‘Prosa e poesia in Giovanni Raboni. Il fascino discreto di una naturalezza straniata’, *Esperienze letterarie*, 36.2 (2011), 115–26.

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------|
| considerai con L'IMMagINazIoNE L'IMMENsa prateria purgatoriale | 12 13 | LIMNE |
| così spesso alle Dieci, Dieci e MezzA DI MAttinA Mentre a casa pensavano | 39 40 | DIMA |
| ma forse fu proprio lì, nell'ARsuRA AtRoce degli inteRvAlli, AspettAndo | 47 48 | AR |
| tutti vivi? e rispondo che l'AngosciA hA Astuzie che la ragione non può | 56 57 | A |
| perché nessuno avesse l'IMpudenza dI MorIre Me vIvo; e invece l'onta | 60 61 | IM |
| di pochissimi anni sul DEcoro DElla famiglia... IncrEDibile: c'erano | 64 65 | DEL |
| del cinema Modena come uN fETO dENTro il vEnTre materno e come uscirne | 71 72 | ENTO |

Table 12. Sound-connectors in NOOC

Linking lines in this way, sharing the same sounds between the last word in the line and the first word in the next, Raboni tailors the whole poem, adding every line to the next one, as if sewing it with a thread. His thread is the prosody of the poem. Furthermore, he changes the thread, or cuts it, making pauses or putting full stops where he chooses, not at the end of the poem or at the end of the line. He often stops in the middle of the line and sometimes even several times in the same line.

Raboni uses prosody like glue to bind his poetic discourse together. First, he glues the words within the line, where apart from alliteration and assonance, he often repeats the same syllable or identical sound combinations. Second, he links two adjoining lines using alliteration and assonance between the last word of the line and the first word of the following line. Below I trace how these two techniques work in a bigger section of text and show how Raboni builds the musicality of the poem as a whole.

The poem starts with a phonetic parallelism of three syllables: NE (ne-ne in line 1 and ne-ne in line 3), CO (in lines 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8,), OR (lines 1 and 9):

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| NELL'ORa, ORmai, della ceNERe | 1 |
| a pochi passi il CORso brulicava | 2 |
| di COMmerci freNETici e ingaNNEvoli | 3 |
| e di delitti CONsumati in sogno | 4 |
| quando per CONtagio di quel che resta | 5 |
| d'un antiCO ricetta di sventure, | 6 |
| cinque camini e sei fiNEstre in tutto | 7 |
| di mattoni COIOR sangue, avviliti | 8 |
| ORa, loRO, da miasmi micidiali | 9 |

In addition, there is repetition of the preposition DI, which creates a phonetic parallelism, but also links with the *enjambements* ('brulicava | di commerci; che resta | d'un antico ricetta'). Starting the line with the preposition 'di', Raboni erases the borders of the line and makes the discourse flow from one line to another. See the aggregated extract below showing alliterations, assonance and parallelisms:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| NELL'ORa, ORmai, della ceNERe | 1 |
| a pOChi passi il CORso bRuliCava | 2 |
| di COMmeRci fReNETici e ingaNNEvoli | 3 |
| e di delitti CONsumati in sogno | 4 |
| quaNdo per CONtagio di quel che resta | 5 |
| d'uN aNTiCO ricetta di sventure, | 6 |
| ciNque camiNi e sei fiNEstre in tutto | 7 |
| di mattoNi COIOR saNgue, avviliti | 8 |
| ORa, loRO, da miasmi micidiali | 9 |

The repetition of the word 'ora' highlights the opposition between two periods, the present ('ora', 'ormai') and the past ('un tempo del famoso flagello'). In addition, apart from the preposition 'di', the lines 7-8 are tied together by alliteration and assonance (IN TuTTO | dI maTTONI). The culmination of these fragments is stressed by the assonance and alliteration at the end of line 9 with words: "MIasMI MIcIdIalI".

In lines 9-15 there is an identical syllable connector within each line: 9 or-or, mi-mi; 10 te-te; 11 ge-ge; 12 con-con; 13 ria-ria; 14 nte-nte; 15 si-si-si. In addition, within this piece there are connections between adjacent lines: 10-11 dAL FAmoso | FLAgeLLo; 12-13 con L'IMMaginazione | L'IMMensa; 14-15 INVISIBILmente | sin quasi agli INVISIBILI. The emphasised words are also

important for the comprehension of the whole poem: ‘invisibile’, ‘immaginazione’.

Words like ‘invisibile’, ‘immaginazione’ and ‘miasmi micidiali’ are all connected to the sense receptors. Raboni can smell and see the past, hidden inside physical buildings and objects. For Raboni the place represents its history, because he blurs the boundaries between different times. In the poem NOOC two places no longer exist: the cinema that was transformed into a supermarket and the Lazzaretto, of which five chimneys and six windows only remain.

The alliteration of sound ‘S’ and ‘L’, the assonance of ‘I’ and ‘A’ and the repetition of the syllable ‘SI’, link lines 14-17, especially with the stress on the word ‘sangue’, which occurs for the second time in the poem. The word ‘goccia’ before ‘sangue’, introduces also the sound ‘g’ making a stronger effect on the reader.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| che dA queLLA fronte InvIS/bILmente | 14 |
| S/n quAS/ AgLI InvISibILI bASTlonI | 15 |
| AvevA per Suo centro SAn CArLLino | 16 |
| come L’oStIa LA SuA goccia dI SAngue | 17 |

Two identical syllables within the line (in-in, occhi-occhi line 18; con-con, er-er line 19), combined with repetitive sounds link lines 18 and 19:

| | |
|----------------------------------------|----|
| quaNdO INgINOCCHiatO pREmevO gli OCCHI | 18 |
| CON le maNI pER vERa CONtriziONE | 19 |

Lines 20-23 have the same sound connectors ‘s’ and ‘a’ and in addition there is repetition of ‘li’ and ‘gn’:

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|----|
| dopo un fAntASTicAto SAcrilegio | 20 |
| e penSAi che lui, Sì, non <i>gli</i> SpAgnoli | 21 |
| ci AvevA AmmASSAti <i>li</i> come Agnelli | 22 |
| per SterminArci. Che colpe, le Stesse | 23 |

The second sentence of the poem starts in the middle of the line 23 and runs until line 37, where it ends in the middle of the line. The syllable ‘ste-ste’ in line 23 connects two sentences. The first sound of the sentence, ‘k’, connects lines 23, 24, and 25:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| per sterminarci. CHe Colpe, le stesse | 23 |
| o altre m’inCHiodano bolgia a bolgia | 24 |
| a Questo rione dove tante volte | 25 |

In addition, the construction of the adverbial modifier of manner ‘bolgia a bolgia’ is supported by other parallelisms later in the poem: ‘palmo a palmo’ (28), ‘a poco prezzo da poco’ (36), ‘alle dieci, dieci e mezza’ (38).

The next four lines (25-28) are united by the alliteration of ‘t’:

| | |
|----------------------------------------|----|
| a quesTo rione dove TanTe volTe | 25 |
| sono naTo e morTo e resusciTaTo | 26 |
| da perderne il conTo, Tiepida, TeTra | 27 |
| giungla baTTuTa palmo a palmo in cerca | 28 |

The assonance of ‘a’ starts in line 28 and continues throughout the poetic discourse until line 37, supported also by alliteration of sounds ‘d’ and ‘s’.

| | |
|----------------------------------------|----|
| giunglA bAttutA pAlmo A pAlmo in cercA | 28 |
| Di vAghe Assoluzioni – così AnDAvo | 29 |
| DomAnDAnDo Al mio cuore e riveDevo | 30 |
| intAnto Di Seguito Alle reliquie | 31 |
| DellA StrAge, Sul medeSimo lAto | 32 |
| Di quellA fenDiturA Di mAnnAiA | 33 |
| Dove StAvo StrisciAnDo, un Altro luogo | 34 |
| D’Abominio e SALvezza, un cinemino | 35 |
| Di puttAne A poco prezzo DA poco | 36 |
| reDento in SupermArket. MAi ScAmbiAtA, | 37 |

The words stressed rhythmically and phonetically are: ‘fenditura di mannaia’ and ‘supermarket’.

The assonance with ‘a’ also links lines 44-46 and 47-49:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| AgonizzAnti Amlire, AnestesiA | 44 |
| o AbiurA dei miei grotteschi rimorsi | 45 |

| | |
|----------------------------------------|----|
| d'Adolescente. E non potrei giurArlo | 46 |
| ma forse fu proprio lì, nell'ArsurA | 47 |
| Atroce degli intervalli, AspettAndo | 48 |
| che quel buio tornAsse come un bAlsAmo | 49 |

The emphasised words here belong to the high register: 'agonizzanti amlire, anestesia, abiura, arsura atroce'.

The third sentence ends in line 54, culminating in the long word 'ignomignosamente', another word from a high register. The fourth sentence is very short especially compared with the previous one, and moreover, is split by commas: 'Ma perché, | mi chiedo, già allora, se erano ancora | tutti vivi?' The colloquial tone of this question is juxtaposed with some elegant constructions in the poem and lexis from the high register. The poet replies to the question in the format of a theatrical dialogue, with assonance of 'a' (lines 56-58) and 'e' (lines 58-60) and alliteration of 'r' and 'n' (lines 56-58) and 'p' (58-60). In addition, in lines 59-60 there is alliteration of 'ss':

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| tutti vivi? e RisPoNdo che l'AngosciA | 56 |
| hA Astuzie che lA RAgioNe NoN Può | 57 |
| svEntArE – o forseE ErA prEcisamEntE | 58 |
| PER loRo, PERché NiENTE succEdEssE, | 59 |
| PERché NEssuNo avEssE l'imPudENza | 60 |

The sounds 's' and 'd' also tie together lines 62-64, highlighting two words ('di schianto', 'subdolamente'):

| | |
|----------------------------------------|----|
| Di morire me vivo; e invece l'onta | 61 |
| Della morte Si Sarebbe abbattuta | 62 |
| Di Schianto, SubDolamente, nel giro | 63 |
| Di pochiSSimi anni Sul DEcoro | 64 |
| DElla famiglia... IncrEDibile: c'erano | 65 |

The next sentence (lines 65-67) starts and ends with the same sound combinations of 'd' and 'e', and in between 'tr' is repeated four times:

| | |
|----------------------------------------|----|
| della famiglia... IncrEdibile: c'erano | 65 |
| altri sconvolgimenti, altre catastrofi | 67 |
| oltre quelli Delle mie inaDEmpienze! | 68 |

The sound connector for the next phrase (lines 68-73) is the alliteration ‘m’:

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|----|
| Ma non anticipiaMo, in quel MoMento | 68 |
| il probleMa ero ancora io, il Mio | 69 |
| rannicchiarMi nel buio scricchiolante | 70 |
| del cineMa Modena coMe un feto | 71 |
| dentro il ventre Materno e coMe uscirne | 72 |
| senza strangolarMi. La relativa | 73 |

The emphasis is on the expression ‘un feto dentro il ventre materno’, rich in alliteration, assonance and internal rhyme, contrasting vividly with the colloquial tone at the beginning of the sentence (lines 68-69).

The next sentence (lines 73-83) is tied together with the alliteration of ‘s’, which starts in the last two words of the previous sentence, line 73. The colloquial beginning of the phrase contrasts with words such as ‘superstiti della peste’, ‘carestia’, from the high register, and found in its ending. These three words are also stressed through use of the identical consonant combination ‘st’:

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|----|
| Senza StrangolarMi. La relativa | 73 |
| normalità dei miei cinquanta e paSSa | 74 |
| anni SucceSSivi può comprovare | 75 |
| l’accaduto, non Spiegarlo: Se So | 76 |
| d’eSSermi liberato del terrore | 77 |
| non So ancora per quanto, né in che modo, | 78 |
| e credo che non meno inconSapevole | 79 |
| Sia Stato Secoli fa, a qualche metro, | 80 |
| l’attonito sciamare dei SuperStiti | 81 |
| della peSte verSo le meraviglie | 82 |
| di un’usuale careStia. Di loro | 83 |

Lines 83-87 are united by the syllable ‘ne’ and ‘po’, highlighting the word ‘foppone’ (‘enormous mass grave’ in Palma’s translation):⁴¹¹

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|----|
| di un’usuale carestia. Di loro | 83 |
| niENte, NEi libri o altrove; NÉ dei morti | 84 |
| portati via a carrettate, sepolti | 85 |
| come viene in qualche foppoNE, all’ombra | 86 |
| d’un filare di gelsi. Quanto all’ospite | 87 |

⁴¹¹ Giovanni Raboni, *Every Third Thought*, p. 369.

The penultimate sentence of the poem (lines 87-95) brings together two different periods: the childhood and adolescence of the lyrical protagonist and the period of the plague. ‘Abietto monumento invisibile’ or ‘cinema-fantasma’ are juxtaposed with ‘santi’, ‘sante macerie’ and ‘ruderi d’un’antica misericordia’. Alliteration of the sounds ‘n’ and ‘s’, and repetition of the syllable ‘qu’ are seen throughout the sentence:

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| d’un filare di gelsi. <i>Qua</i> Nto all’o <i>Sp</i> ite | 87 |
| del ci <i>N</i> ema-fa <i>N</i> tasma, al <i>qui</i> Sc <i>r</i> ivente, | 88 |
| Stia un po’ zitto adesso, Se N’ha abba <i>Sta</i> Nza | 89 |
| delle Sue <i>quer</i> imonie: Ne <i>SSu</i> N Ne <i>SSo</i> | 90 |
| fra il resi <i>St</i> ere a di <i>Sp</i> etto dei Sa <i>N</i> ti | 91 |
| di <i>que</i> lle Sa <i>N</i> te macerie, <i>quei</i> ruderi | 92 |
| d’uN’a <i>N</i> tica misericordia e | 93 |
| <i>que</i> Sto abietto mo <i>Num</i> eNto i <i>N</i> visibile | 94 |
| alla Sua i <i>N</i> faNzia iNtermiNata. | 95 |

Here the author refers to his admonition to himself to cease talking (88-89). Stylistically there is opposition between this colloquial beginning of the phrase and use of an elegant word ‘querimonie’, a religious term connecting us also to saints and saintly ruins from a different age. One of the key words is in line 84, ‘invisibile’, and is supported afterwards by triple repetition of syllable ‘in’ in line 95.

The last segment of the poem (lines 95-99) repeats the sound ‘m’ and ‘f’, the combination of which indicates one of Raboni’s key words: ‘fiume’. There is also the assonance of ‘i’. Moreover, there is a connective syllable ‘re/er’ seen in the use of 5 infinitives in one sentence. These verbs suggest movement, the journey of the protagonist, with which the poem starts. Another significant word is ‘cenere’ which creates a circular composition to the poem and brings us back to its first line.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| alla sua infanzia interMinata. Meglio | 95 |
| Muoversi, affrettare l’incerto passo | 96 |
| priMa che la cenere solidifichi | 97 |
| alla volta del gran fiuMe iMMinente | 98 |
| e lì svoltare, perdersi, svanire. | 99 |

Close reading of the poem reveals its key words are stressed phonetically. One of the first collocations is: ‘un tempo dal famoso | flagello’ (10-11) and especially the word ‘flagello’ (scourge, flagellum, plague). The semantic field of ‘plague’ is supported also by other words: ‘contagio’ (5), ‘ricetto di sventure’ (6), ‘mattoni color sangue’ (8), ‘miasmi micidiali’ (9), ‘l’immensa prateria purgatoriale’ (13), ‘invisibili bastioni’ (15), ‘San Carlino’ (16), ‘fenditura di mannaia’ (33), ‘l’attonito sciamare dei superstiti | della peste’ (81-82), ‘morti | portati via a carrettate, sepolti | come viene in qualche foppone, all’ombra | d’un filare di gelsi’ (84-87), ‘sante macerie’ (92), and ‘ruderi | d’un’antica misericordia’ (92-93).

The sound ‘f’ occurs only 26 times in the whole poem (3, 7, 10, 11, 14, 20, 33, 41, 42, 47, 47, 51, 58, 65, 66, 71, 80, 86, 87, 88, 91, 95, 96, 97, 98). The words, emphasised by this sound play a particular role. The word ‘foppone’ belongs to a high register lexis from Manzoni’s plague description, while the other two words, ‘cinema-fantasma’ and ‘infanzia’, refer to the second period in the poem, Raboni’s adolescence. The word ‘filare’ relates to Raboni’s architectonic perspective and his quality of ‘seeing’ the invisible, as with the Lazzaretto that no longer exists. In general, it illustrates his disposition towards lines, exact numbers, structure and his view of space. The three words ‘affrettare’, ‘solidifichi’ and ‘fiume’ are related to movement and flow, both in time and space. He asks us to hurry while we have time (‘affrettare l’incerto passo’), before it is too late.

Only in two cases at the end of the poem does the alliteration of ‘f’ bind several lines. But still this sound is significant in the poetic discourse: ‘come viene in qualche foppone, all’ombra | d’un filare di gelsi. Quanto all’ospite | del cinema-fantasma, al qui scrivente’ 86-88; ‘alla sua infanzia interminata. Meglio | muoversi, affrettare l’incerto passo | prima che la cenere solidifichi | alla volta del gran fiume imminente’ 95-98.

Raboni not only gives his collections precise and detailed structure, dividing every book into sections and paying attention to the number of poems, but he

also carefully structures each poem. In this way each fragment of the collection, being an integral part of the whole, has its own elaborate structure.⁴¹²

The poem NOOC has a fluid structure of the hendecasyllable verse. In a similar way to his experiments with the sonnet form, Raboni chooses a traditional form but fills it with poetic 'liquid' discourse.⁴¹³ The traditional form acts as a protective shield for Raboni allowing him to speak frankly.⁴¹⁴ He uses different techniques in order to populate this form and create the effect of a fluid, never-ending poem. The fluidity of his poetic discourse reminds us also of the long sentences from PPT – short fragments of the urban life with the same skeleton – the metaphor of a life journey incorporated into walking along Corso Buenos Aires.

In order to build such a fluid discourse Raboni uses several techniques. In Chapter 2 we saw evidence of the peak of his technical mastery, but elements of these techniques can be seen also in his earlier poems, considered in Chapter 3,

⁴¹² Ramat writes about fragments in poetic discourse, used extensively in the twentieth century, and the fluid boundaries of the physical space of the fragment that make the words less lyrical (and maybe more prosaic): '[I]l rapporto che in primo luogo impegna il frammento è proprio con il suo stesso spazio fisico, con una pagina che non è più dato concepire come un quieto letto da invadere da colmare, ma anzi adesso temuta come un margine mobile: il timore è che si muova contro la parola medesima e la sua dicibilità, che scatti ad ammutolirla, a privarla di qualsiasi probabilità espressiva'. See Silvio Ramat, *Storia della poesia italiana del Novecento*, Civiltà letteraria del Novecento, n. 23 (Milan: Mursia, 1976), p. 24.

⁴¹³ Berardinelli while describing trends in poetry in the 1970s mentions the lack of boundaries between prose and verse, mentioning the year 1976 when Amelia Rosselli's *Documento* was published: 'Nel 1976 Amelia Rosselli pubblica *Documento* e diventa uno degli autori più letti e amati dai giovani. Nella sua poesia si fondono lirismo e diario narrativo e diventano difficilmente distinguibili i confini fra versi e prosa'. See Alfonso Berardinelli, 'I postmoderni tornano al classico: la poesia contemporanea sperimenta usando le forme tradizionali', *Corriere della Sera*, 12 January 2011, p. 41. Another example can be Vittorio Sereni. Southerden also points out 'the permeable boundaries between poetry and prose' in Sereni's poem 'Un posto di vacanza' (1971), a poem that Sereni classified as a 'poesia in sette parti'. See Francesca Southerden, "'Per-tras-versioni" dantesche: Post-Paradistical Constellations in the Poetry of Vittorio Sereni and Andrea Zanzotto', in *Metamorphosing Dante: Appropriations, Manipulations, and Rewritings in the Twentieth- and Twenty-First Centuries*, ed. by Manuele Gagnoli, Fabio Camilletti, and Fabian Lampart (Wien; Berlin: Verlag Turia + Kant, 2010), pp.153-174, p. 159; for the quote from Sereni see Vittorio Sereni, *Un posto di vacanza* (Milan, All'insegna del pesce d'oro, 1973), p. 31.

⁴¹⁴ In addition, Berardinelli also points out the common feature of referring to traditional forms and writers and mixing different registers and styles in the poetic discourse: 'Come osservava Raboni, si trovò allora un modo del tutto diverso di fare esperimenti: si capì che era possibile sperimentare nel riuso di forme tradizionali. La poesia di oggi conserva queste caratteristiche: eclettismo, artigianato metrico, teatralizzazione e narratività, uso simultaneo e mescolanza di lingua d'uso e stile alto. Il passato del nostro presente poetico ormai, da tempo, non è più il Novecento e neppure la Modernità. È un passato enormemente dilatato in tutte le direzioni. Si può scrivere pensando a Catullo e a Cavalcanti, a Villon, a Metastasio, a Pascoli: perfino a Dante, a Tasso e a Puskin'. Berardinelli Alfonso, 'I postmoderni tornano al classico: la poesia contemporanea sperimenta usando le forme tradizionali', cit., p. 41.

where I trace how Raboni developed both the theme of cityscape and his poetic discourse. First, he refuses to use conventional syntax, abolishing commas, creating long sentences, breaking them up and putting pauses where they should not be (lines 9, 21, 27, 38, 55, 65, 84, 99). There are only 9 examples of punctuation or a pause at the end of the line (lines 6, 37, 51, 54, 59, 67, 78, 80, 88) and in a poem totalling 99 lines, there are 11 long sentences describing the protagonist and the reader walking through Raboni's favourite area of Milan. As neither stops on this journey, they do not need full stops or other punctuation obstacles on their way, ('meglio muoversi' lines 95-96) and they continue to walk even at the end of the poem.

By rejecting conventional syntax Raboni often goes beyond the line of the poem with *enjambements*. He frequently splits a collocation or two dependent words, for example, leaving a noun at the end of the line and placing its adjective (tetra | giungla 27-28) or complement (alle reliquie | della strage 31-32) on the next line, splitting the modal verb and infinitive (la ragione non può | sventare 57-58), a verb and adverb (il cuore si contorce | ignominiosamente 53-54), or a subject and its verb (che l'angoscia | ha astuzie 56-57). For example, 24 lines out of 99 begin with the preposition "di" which often introduces an indirect complement.

The third interesting feature of Raboni's poetry is that he mixes the colloquial register of the text with the high register on both a lexical and syntactical level. Very long phrases are juxtaposed with some short conversational constructions. The long phrases and poetic vocabulary are normally related to the historical past, while describing 'un tempo del famoso flagello'. However, even for periods of time the poetic discourse includes both everyday words and words from the high register. For example, in lines 53-56, we see the ending of a long sentence, describing the remote feelings of the protagonist while watching pornographic films (il cuore si contorce | ignominiosamente). The next two syntactical blocks illustrate the variety of lexis strata in the poem. An informal question, which consists of short pieces, is followed by the answer with words such as 'astuzia' and 'sventare'.

| | |
|----------------------------------------|----|
| il cuore si contorce | 53 |
| ignominiosamente. Ma perché, | 54 |
| mi chiedo, già allora, se erano ancora | 55 |
| tutti vivi? e rispondo che l'angoscia | 56 |

ha astuzie che la ragione non può
sventare

57
58

Even if the fluidity in the poem NOOC and in *poèmes en prose* PPT differs from Raboni's translations of Baudelaire, the technique of binding together colloquial and poetic lexis, plus musicality and phonetic choices shows similarities with Raboni's activities, both as a poet and as a translator of poetry. Before looking closer at Raboni's translation and the dialogue between the two metropolitan poets, Raboni and Baudelaire, I will try to depict the Milan of Raboni's works better. The focus of my analysis will shift from the street (Corso) to inside the house. I will analyse the portrayals of the indoor and outdoor environments, tracing the same features of time layers and visibility and invisibility. An important element of the cityscape – windows – belongs to the liminal space and serves as a border between the outside and inside, but in addition, also illustrates further connection with Baudelaire. To achieve a comprehensive picture of the cityscape, after houses and indoors, I will consider squares, cinemas and public transport. All these elements contribute towards the image of the city and extend the understanding of Raboni's Milan. Since I will focus on earlier Raboni's poems, it will be interesting to trace how Raboni shaped his poetic discourse and imagery and observe how the cityscape evolved into a fluid river of Corso Buenos Aires.

Chapter 3. The transitional cityscape: boundaries and thresholds in the urban landscape

*Mi piace questa piazza. Più è deserta
e più mi piace. Posso popolarla
di chi voglio, incontrarci, camminando,
gli altrimenti introvabili.*
(Raboni, 'La piazza')⁴¹⁵

This chapter focuses on the representation of two spatial realities: domestic and urban. I explore the connection between the house, with its domestic environment and the city as a whole with its urban elements of squares, cinemas, and public transport. I analyse not only the boundaries between domestic and urban spaces, but also the borders of specific elements of the urban landscape.

I start with an analysis of Raboni's use of windows, a crucial element of urban reality and important for Raboni, because it served as the starting point for his poetry. In this sense we can also draw a parallel with Baudelaire's 'Les Fenêtres'.⁴¹⁶ In addition to the physical characteristic of windows, linking the inner world and the outside space, the image of the window fulfils the function of poetic perspective framing both his spatial and temporal perception.

However, the image of a windowpane in Raboni's poetry fulfils another function in addition to the process of composition. By analysing the poem 'Testimoni' (1954) I illustrate how windows frame the perception of other protagonists and reveal what is known to them about their witnessing of crimes, but which is unknown to others. My discussion of the composition of the poems will progress

⁴¹⁵ Giovanni Raboni and Patrizia Valduga, *Ultimi versi* (Milan: Garzanti, 2006), p.31

⁴¹⁶ See the comment about the function of windows in Baudelaire's 'Les Fenêtres' by Hiddleston: 'The key to the piece is, as the title indicates, the symbol of the window and *the distance between the poet and the object* he is contemplating. The window functions, after all, as a kind of mirror in which there is some reflection of the poet himself. [...] It seems as though in many of the prose poems Baudelaire is viewing the scenes of Paris life through such a transforming window. Much has been made by some critics of the realism of these poems and by would-be imitators who have produced turgid 'choses vues' of Paris life; but what is most striking is the surreal quality of the poems, and the extent to which they bring about a *fusion of poetry and life* [my emphasis]'. James Andrew Hiddleston, *Baudelaire and Le Spleen de Paris* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), p. 29. We will see later in my analysis of Raboni's use of the image of the window that it fulfils the same functions as in Baudelaire's poetry.

from Raboni's use of the physical features of glass and its transparency, to the metaphor of visibility and invisibility and his use of memories and the past, with references to crimes and Manzoni's plague.

As well as the different uses of the image of windows in Raboni's work, I focus on both of the spaces that they divide: domestic space, with the opposition between outside and inside, and common public space in the city, defined by Augé as 'non-places'. I trace how the spatio-temporality and the concept of boundaries in Raboni's earliest poems evolved into movement and the fluid discourse that we saw in Chapter 2.

3.1. Window: the boundary between (indoor and outdoor) spaces

Windows are a recurrent topos of cityscape in literature.⁴¹⁷ For example, Aldo Palazzeschi, another Italian poet from the first poetic generation since Unification according to Macrí,⁴¹⁸ was also inspired by urban and domestic environments.⁴¹⁹ Thus, he builds the poem 'La città del sole mio' (1910) on the peculiar ability of the author to perceive information that normal people cannot see. The poet is able both to see the 'invisible' and to describe it: 'Venite qua, | sotto la finestra | della mia stanza da letto, | tutto da me saprete, vi prometto. | Non vi voltate indietro, | guardate qua! | *La città voi non la potete vedere* | *ci vuole il mio canocchiale*; | venite a sentire. | Accovacciatevi in silenzio, | non è tanto robusta la mia voce, | statevi muti | come stareste ai piedi della croce' [my emphasis].⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁷ For example, see Ilaria De Seta, 'Dentro e fuori lo spazio domestico del *Barone di Nicastro* di Nievo', in *Spazio domestico e spazio quotidiano nella letteratura e nel cinema dall'Ottocento a oggi*, ed. by Kathrin Ackermann and Susanne Winter, *Civiltà Italiana - AIPI*, 3 (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2014), pp. 91–101 (pp. 95–96).

⁴¹⁸ See Oreste Macrí, *Studi montaliani: la vita della parola* (Florence: Le lettere, 1996); Oreste Macrí and Anna Dolfi, *La vita della parola: studi su Ungaretti e poeti coevi* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1998).

⁴¹⁹ 'Se leggiamo le poesie tenendo presente la biografia di Palazzeschi, vediamo che i luoghi, gli interni dove vivere e incontrarsi, fantasiosi o realistici, punti fissi d'ispirazione, nella vita pratica avevano il loro corrispondente in una smaniosa ricerca della residenza ideale. Le case, i castelli sono come i pezzi di un Lego, di cui sceglie con amorosa infantile onnipotenza i materiali, le forme e i colori, sistemando con gioia i vari pezzi. E quando, con una "casetta di cristallo" e con un suo "bel castello" è stanco di giocare, se ne inventa altri, scrupolosamente scelti'. See Piera Mattei, *I poeti e la città* (Florence: Il Bisonte, 2009), p. 28.

⁴²⁰ Aldo Palazzeschi, *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Adele Dei, *I Meridiani* (Milan: Mondadori, 2002), p. 223.

This poem ends with the poet's request to his audience to leave him alone: 'E ora potete andare, | io chiudo la mia finestra, | vado a riposare'. He is exhausted after announcing the beauty of the world to his spectators and serving as mediator with his prodigious eye, his 'telescope'. Both the process of composition and the author's voice stop once the protagonist closes the window.

These two features, on the one hand the ability to see more than others and then write a poem about it, and on the other hand to communicate with people while remaining distanced from them, are also important for Raboni. The window that symbolises poetry inspired him to write poems. When composing he tried to evoke his feelings as a child observer in order to recreate the perspective of a boy standing near the window:

[D]alla finestra della stanza dove dormivo con mio fratello più grande si guardava su un terreno vago che ricordava la periferia anche se, in realtà, non eravamo in periferia. Questo terreno vago si animava – soprattutto di pomeriggio, e soprattutto di sabato pomeriggio – di giochi di ragazzi. Giocavano al pallone, alla guerra, agli indiani. Forse dovrei dire: giocavamo; mi sembra molto probabile di aver partecipato a quei giochi, ma non ne ho nessun ricordo preciso. Quello che ricordo, invece, è di aver guardato altri ragazzi giocare. Erano giochi deliziosi. Quella finestra è, sicuramente, uno dei luoghi, o meglio delle situazioni, che mi hanno spinto a voler essere un poeta, a voler scrivere delle poesie. Per molto tempo ho pensato che una poesia dovesse essere come quella finestra. *Mi sembrava che poesia fosse un vetro attraverso il quale si potevano vedere molte cose – forse, tutte le cose*; però un vetro, e il fatto che il vetro fosse trasparente non era più importante del fatto che il vetro stesse in mezzo, che mi isolasse, mi difendesse. I giochi erano al di là del vetro, mentre io ero al di qua. Credo che non riuscirò mai a far capire la straordinaria delizia di questa situazione. Quello che è certo, comunque, è che quando ho cominciato a scrivere poesie la mia più grande aspirazione era di ritrovare quel tipo di delizia o, se si vuole, di privilegio. Di ogni poesia avrei voluto fare un osservatorio difesissimo e trasparente, un osservatorio per guardare la vita – cioè, forse, per viverla [my emphasis].⁴²¹

Here the metaphor of a telescope is transformed into a glass through which Raboni could see all things. The person looking through the lens tries to achieve a secret knowledge that others do not have. Palazzeschi chooses to use this prodigious function, known since ancient times, of the poet and the opposition between the poet and ordinary people. Raboni however, prefers to focus on the people themselves without looking too far into the distance. He describes how the ordinary situation of looking through the window triggers inner thoughts. He does not need a special tool like a telescope to achieve particular knowledge. In the quotation above, the children's playground, Raboni observes and describes

⁴²¹ Giovanni Raboni, 'Autoritratto 1977', in *Tutte le poesie (1949-2004)*, by Giovanni Raboni, ed. by Rodolfo Zucco, 2 vols., 2014, I, v – xi (p. v).

everyday life – *tableaux* of Milanese life.⁴²² Although he does not remember whether or not he played with children, Raboni shares their feelings through his use of the same word – ‘giochi deliziosi’ with reference to the children and ‘la straordinaria delizia’ and ‘quel tipo di delizia’ referring to himself – and thus still connects to this situation. The pleasure of watching other children play is equal to being a participant in their games. In fact, this pleasure represents ‘real life’ for the poet; he lives life by observing others.

The windowpane has two ambivalent features that are attractive to the boy: it is transparent thus revealing everything, but also offers protection because it separates the narrator from other people and reality. While Capello notes the passive role of the observer in the article about Palazzeschi,⁴²³ conversely for Raboni, observing life means living it. The passive role of the observer makes Raboni a participant in the event, an idea further developed in the poem ‘Testimoni’.

Raboni and Palazzeschi share another common feature when describing space: both poets look through their bedroom windows (‘camera da letto’ in Palazzeschi and ‘dalla finestra della stanza dove dormivo’ in Raboni), although Raboni’s approach differs from Palazzeschi’s because the reader is supposed to look through a child’s eye and not that of an adult poet. Raboni acknowledges that the child’s memories might not be precise, because he is uncertain which form of the verb ‘giocare’ to use: the third person plural indicating ‘they’, all the children, or the first person plural meaning ‘we’, namely ‘other children and I’. Thus, this distancing from others is a kind of juxtaposition of perspective, a common element for both Palazzeschi and Raboni. The passersby who do not have Raboni’s ‘telescope’, enabling them to see invisible stories and the hidden past cannot even use their physical ability to see. (Compare this with the deaf-mute people from PPT who, even without their physical ability to speak, can fulfill the function of speaking.) Although in his aforementioned quote from ‘Autoritratto

⁴²² Raboni also writes about everyday life using elements of colloquial speech, fluid text. The content and the language reflect the ideas of Ezra Pound (See Stephen Fry, *The Ode Less Travelled: Unlocking the Poet within* (London: Hutchinson, 2005), p.173). As stated earlier, Pound was important for Raboni.

⁴²³ Francesco Capello, ‘La strada verso la città: spazio urbano, poesia e soggetto nel primo Palazzeschi (1905–13)’, *Italian Studies*, 68.2 (2013), 246–74 (pp. 249–250).

1977' Raboni does not express the uniqueness of the poet, in his later works, for example as seen in Chapter 2 in 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale', to convey his reproach, he employs the metaphor of hurrying passersby⁴²⁴ who neither bother to look around nor up, thinking only about their material wellbeing.⁴²⁵ Thus, in Raboni's work the focus shifts from the figure of the poet to other people.

Later in the same article Raboni reflects on his poetic work and admits that his first impulse in writing is the feeling of looking as an observer, of being a passive accomplice to reality. His perception of poetry in general has evolved over the years into the contrary tendency of not being transparent. In his poems Raboni, while trying to capture this feeling of his personal experience of being an observer, is lacking in transparency: 'Naturalmente, la storia di quella che io considero adesso la mia poesia comincia dopo; comincia, immagino, proprio con la negazione, con la rinuncia a tutto questo: la finestra, l'osservatorio, la trasparenza'.⁴²⁶ At the beginning of his career Raboni composed poems using the metaphor of the window, as a form of protection – the alienation effect, known as 'ostranenie' in Russian Formalist literature – that enabled him to express his thoughts freely. Later the same function was fulfilled by the canonical forms, like the sonnet: the skeleton of the fixed poetic meter and form protects the poet and helps him. However, afterwards Raboni adds that the symbols of windows, observation and transparency still persist in his later lyrics, not just his early poems: 'Ma la faccenda non deve essere del tutto risolta, almeno nel mio inconscio, se ancora pochi anni fa mi è capitato di scrivere questa poesia dopo averla, credo, almeno in parte, veramente sognata...'⁴²⁷ The poem 'Come cieco, con ansia...' (1972) from *Cadenza d'inganno* (1975) that he partly dreamt of (which links also to the prodigious nature of poetry) follows these words and, in general, the introduction in 'Autoritratto 1977':

⁴²⁴ Palazzeschi expressed this point also in his poem 'Le Carovane': 'Dalla finestra della mia stanza da letto | io me ne sto a guardare | tutto quell'andare, | quell'ansare, quel sostare'. See Aldo Palazzeschi, *Tutte le poesie*, ed. by Adele Dei, I Meridiani (Milan: Mondadori, 2002), p. 221.

⁴²⁵ As seen in Chapter 2. For example, the third prose from 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale': 'qualcuno trovandosi a passare di qui per una compravendita di tessuti o per i bisogni imperterriti del rimorso non alzerà nemmeno gli occhi alle irriconoscibili finestre dell'edificio ma sussurerà con riconoscente apprensione il nome glorioso dell'assassina'. See Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 811.

⁴²⁶ Raboni, 'Autoritratto 1977', p. vi.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

Come cieco, con ansia...

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------|----|
| Come cieco, con ansia, contro | 1 |
| il temporale e la grandine, una | 2 |
| dopo l'altra chiudevo | 3 |
| sette finestre. | 4 |
| Importava che non sapessi quali. | 5 |
| Solo all'alba, tremando, | 6 |
| con l'orrenda minuzia di chi si sveglia o muore, | 7 |
| capisco che ho strisciato | 8 |
| dentro il solito buio, | 9 |
| via San Gregorio primo piano. | 10 |
| Al di qua dei miei figli, | 11 |
| di poter dare o prendere parola. | 12 |

Raboni's poems contain myriad topographic details (names of streets,⁴²⁸ numbers of trams) from Milan mirroring the private life of the poet (Via San Gregorio, Via Solferino, Via Panfilo Castaldi, Via Morigi, via Fiori Chiari, via Fatebenefratelli, via Rasori etc) as well as the lives of his ancestors. As previously stated, 53 Via San Gregorio is a recurrent scene for Raboni, being the house where he spent his childhood and adolescence and where he was the observer at the window. Raboni refers often to this house in his comments and works, describing it and recounting its history as well as the emotions and memories it evokes in his consciousness:

Quando io sono nato, quarantacinque anni fa, a Milano, i miei genitori abitavano in via San Gregorio. Era una casa né vecchia né nuova, credo che risalisse - come tante altre case in quella zona di Milano - agli anni intorno alla prima guerra mondiale. Una volta, da quelle parti, c'era la stazione ferroviaria; credo che dalle finestre di casa mia si vedessero i binari. Ma nel 1932, quando io sono nato, i binari non si vedevano più, non c'erano più.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁸ An interesting fact, mentioned by a journalist who interviewed Raboni, is that the poet refers to the street dedicated to certain famous people and bearing their names, using both first names and surnames: 'Prendo nota che pure lui, come molti milanesi, è abituato a chiamare certe vie con nome e cognome (altro esempio: Mauro Macchi) mentre non ho mai sentito nessuno dire "via Ludovico Settala" oppure "via Alessandro Scarlatti"'. See Mura, 'La ricerca di Raboni: "Milano è emozione"', p. 7.

⁴²⁹ Raboni, I, p. v.

Here we have a detailed, physical description of a house of uncertain age⁴³⁰ during the fascist period of the 1930s, when much construction took place in Milan. The central railway station, now situated on the boundary of Corso Buenos Aires, was once near Raboni's house. He evokes not just his own childhood memories, but also memories of his ancestors. He tries to imagine the view from his window before his birth, and to see the old railway station and its platforms, in a similar way to his visual-textual reconstruction of the Lazzaretto. This technique of overlapping layers of different pasts, his childhood and the period before his birth, is common in Raboni's works.

The last two lines of 'Come cieco, con ansia...' confirm he is illustrating his own childhood, because the scene, seeming to be on the verge of a nightmare, is set during the period when the protagonist does not yet have his own children and before he started composing poetry: 'Al di qua dei miei figli, | di poter dare o prendere parola'. There is also a reference to the delightful situation of the observer in front of the window (the aforementioned 'straordinaria delizia').⁴³¹

Referring to the grammatical framework, the first four lines depict the emotion of the lyrical 'I' and immerse us in his past using the *imperfetto*, often related to childhood and memories ('chiudevo', 'importava'). The protagonist expresses his feelings in the present tense ('si sveglia', 'muore', 'capisco') while the result of his past action is conveyed in the *passato prossimo* ('ho strisciato'). However, 'buio' for Raboni can also have a positive connotation because it is as protective as the windowpane. For example, in the poem 'Cinema di pomeriggio' (3.4) characters wait for the auditorium to become dark and the film to begin in order to feel safe and secure.⁴³² For another example, where 'buio' is associated with magic, refer to the poem 'Le luci di Milano': 'nell'oscuro incantesimo del buio'.⁴³³

In the poem 'Come cieco, con ansia...' we see the opposition between inside and outside: two spaces separated by the window. Windows here fulfil their protective function. The interior is a safe space whereas the outside is dangerous, rainy with the threatening sounds of a hail-storm expressed in phonetic

⁴³⁰ The same uncertainty discussed in PPT, for example regarding Raboni's own age or numbers.

⁴³¹ Raboni, I, p. v.

⁴³² 'L'oscurità del resto può anche avere, subdolamente, un valore di rifugio, nascondiglio di sé che si vuole tenere segrete'. See Magro, *Un luogo della verità umana*, cit., p. 68.

⁴³³ Giovanni Raboni, *Barlumi di storia* (Milan: Mondadori, 2002), p. 54.

parallelism from the outset; line 1 with explosive sound ‘K’: ‘COme cieCO, CON aNsia, CONtro | il temporale e la graNdiNe, uNa | dopo l’altra CHIudevo | sette finestre’. The scenes described in lines 1-4 happen at night, but even at dawn the protagonist continues to tremble in the liminal state: on the one hand of a person who starts to wake up and does not fully grasp reality, afraid of everything and feeling fragile, and on the other hand similar to that of a dying person: ‘con l’orrenda minuzia di chi si sveglia o muore’. The protagonist brought something dangerous and evil into the house, which is a safe familiar environment: ‘capisco che ho strisciato | dentro il solito buio’.

We find menacing sounds in another of Raboni’s poems ‘Compleanno’, dedicated to the birth of his son Lazzaro, born on 24 August 1959. Furthermore, the sounds here are not of the storm, but typical of the urban environment rather than the natural world - the acute whistle from drainpipes and the roar of the air conditioning system: ‘Dalle gronde | viene un fischio acutissimo, leggero, come | se in un altro quartiere, oltre l’astruso | cerchio del Vigorelli, nel rombo | dell’aria condizionata | nascesse ancora tuo figlio’.⁴³⁴

In his article, ‘Riflessioni sullo spazio domestico’, Raboni considered inside space to be both living space and the site of the owner’s inner drive, hosting the owner’s thoughts and dreams: ‘per me non è soltanto lo spazio in cui si vive, in cui l’uomo trova riparo e risposta alle sue esigenze materiali, ma è anche lo spazio in cui sono ambientate *le sue pulsioni interiori*, sono ambientati *i suoi pensieri*, sono ambientati *i suoi sogni* [my emphasis]’.⁴³⁵

Then Raboni continues by mentioning the house in Via San Gregorio:

[I] miei sogni si ambientano sempre, quando sono sogni di interni, si ambientano sempre in una casa che è la casa della mia infanzia [...] ho avuto anch’io un trasferimento traumatico durante la guerra in un’altra casa e quindi le due case un po’ si confondono, si intrecciano, si sovrappongono l’una all’altra. Comunque, o l’una o l’altra, o un insieme di tutte e due sono sempre il luogo – poi naturalmente metamorfosato, trasfigurato, a volte quasi irricognoscibile – ma sono sempre il luogo in cui i miei sogni sono ambientati. E questo credo sia perché effettivamente la casa, appunto, non è soltanto il nostro riparo materiale, ma è anche il luogo un cui noi ambientiamo, in cui noi collochiamo – più o meno consapevolmente anzi, credo inconsapevolmente, inconsciamente – la cosiddetta ‘azione primordiale’: la nostra casa,

⁴³⁴ Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 55.

⁴³⁵ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Riflessioni sullo spazio domestico’, in *La casa sociale. Dalla legge Luzzatti alle nuove politiche per la casa in Lombardia*, ed. by Raffaele Pugliese, Politecnico Milano (Milan: Unicopli, 2005), pp. 53–55 (p. 53).

la casa della nostra infanzia, la casa in cui abbiamo cominciato a vivere e a prendere coscienza di noi.⁴³⁶

Apart from the house in Via San Gregorio, Raboni also recalls his family's country summer house in Sant'Ambrogio Olona, where his family was forced to seek refuge from the bombings in Milan during the war, as stated in the introduction and further developed in Chapter 1. Raboni's experience as a child growing up during the war is a constant theme in his work, often linked to the heroism of his father, to a short period of living in the countryside and to his extensive reading. Examples include 'La guerra',⁴³⁷ 'L'album dei ricordi di guerra', and the collection *Versi guerrieri e amorosi* (1984-1989). One of the poems about his second childhood home mentioned in the title of the poem 'La casa di campagna dove leggere' is found in his later books *Quare tristis* (1998).

Returning to the image of window,⁴³⁸ apart from the poem 'Come cieco, con ansia...' and similar to Raboni's memories of standing near the window, the theme of the observer is tackled in the poem 'Testimoni' (1954) from his first collection *Gesta Romanorum*. This poem was revised in a later edition when it was published in *A ogni caro sangue* anthology (1953-87) with minor modifications to lines 4 ('sottoporteghi' vs 'sottoportici'), 9-11 ('nell'orecchio peloso' vs 'nell'orecchio', 'del confessore' vs 'd'un confessore', last sentence in brackets in the later version) (see Table 13).

'Testimoni' deals with the topos of 'windows' in a different way from the poem 'Come cieco, con ansia...'. Protagonists look through the window and see things they are not supposed to see. Two differences with the previously analysed examples are: firstly, the lyrical character is not the poet but ordinary citizens, and secondly, the act of observing is here linked to a crime, not to the delights and joys of life. However, both poems share the same choice of lexis ('all'alba',

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ See also the article about this Raboni's poem by Silvana Tamiozzo Goldman, 'Intorno a *La guerra* di Giovanni Raboni', *l'immaginazione*, 289 (2015), 26-27.

⁴³⁸ The image of window is central in some other poems by Raboni, such as 'Testimoni' (1954), 'Dalla mia finestra' (1955-59), 'Canzone' (1960-61), 'Lezioni di economia politica' (1963), 'Parti di requiem' (1957-1974), 'L'appartamento' (1980, analysed in section 3.3.), 'Le nozze' (1981-1982), 'Lista di Spagna' (1981), 'Non sono bandiere queste bandiere' (1993), 'Ci sono sere che vorrei guardare' (1998), and 'Nell'ora, ormai, della cenere' (1998, analysed in Chapter 2).

‘finestre’, ‘buio’) and the common feeling of anxiety (‘con ansia’, ‘tremando’) that transforms into fear (‘timorati’) – all these words exist in Raboni’s lyrical vocabulary.

| Testimoni (1954) | Testimoni (rev.) | |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----|
| Qui il duca fu pugnalato, e questo è il pozzo | Qui il duca fu pugnalato, e questo è il pozzo | 1 |
| dove si sbarazzarono del corpo | dove si sbarazzarono del corpo | 2 |
| fino all’alba. M’immagino la scena. | fino all’alba. M’immagino la scena. | 3 |
| Ma fra tante finestre, sottoporteghi, scale | Ma fra tante finestre, sottoportici, scale | 4 |
| chissà quante parole della rissa | chissà quante parole della rissa | 5 |
| trovarono orecchi avidi e timorati, cuori | trovarono orecchi avidi e timorati, cuori | 6 |
| pronti a soffrire quest’altro segreto | pronti a soffrire quest’altro segreto | 7 |
| per carità di patria. O a bisbigliarlo | per carità di patria. O a bisbigliarlo | 8 |
| più tardi, in fin di vita, nell’orecchio peloso | più tardi, in fin di vita, nell’orecchio | 9 |
| del confessore. Circolazione di notizie | d’un confessore. (Circolazione di notizie | 10 |
| nel buio delle viscere. | nel buio delle viscere.) | 11 |

Table 13. Two versions of the poem ‘Testimoni’

Initially the reader sees the courtyard where the tragedy happened. It seems that the window protects no one. However, at the end of the poem it is clear that the real protagonists remained behind their windows, as witnesses (as mentioned in the title). Drawing on analysis of ‘Testimoni’ I will trace how the main topics of Raboni’s lyric, including the image of windows, evolve throughout his life and compare them with previous uses of the image of the window.

Raboni maps the location from the beginning. In terms of spatial perspective the poem starts with words indicating a place: the first word ‘qui’ is followed by another space-marker ‘questo è il pozzo’. From the outset the reader is included in the narration by mention of a place that is presumed to be near him. The first sentence runs till line 3, where the author also states a time frame: the use of the *passato remoto* (‘fu pugnalato’, ‘si sbarazzarono’) refers to events that happened many years ago. In addition, the third line gives a precise moment in the day, when the tragedy occurred: at night, before daylight (‘fino all’alba’). The last

line, where ‘buio’ is mentioned (‘nel buio delle viscere’), also supports the metaphor of night or early morning.⁴³⁹

The poem begins again with the colloquial expression ‘qui’ and the reader seems to be in the middle of the conversation. ‘Qui’, the first word of the poem refers later to the present tense and connects to the sentence in line 3: ‘M’immagino la scena.’ The well, a crime scene, triggers in the author’s imagination thoughts of injustice, hidden crimes, and silent witnesses acting as accomplices.⁴⁴⁰ Nowadays, a well is associated with the countryside rather than the urban landscape, yet here it could refer to a different epoch, in the same way as the use of the *passato remoto*, representing what Certeau calls ‘ghost in the city’.⁴⁴¹ In addition, a well is a typical element of the cityscape in Venice.⁴⁴²

From a statement about a crime having been committed here and a corpse hidden before sunrise, the author goes back in time imagining retrospectively the violent fight between people resulting in the assassination of the duke. However, the emphasis is not on the crime itself, but on the witnesses, endorsed by the poem’s title ‘Testimoni’.⁴⁴³

Line 4 continues with three features of the urban environment (‘tante finestre, sottoporteghi, scale’) representing places where people can hide, perfect for criminal settings: windows where the observer is protected by the pane of glass separating outdoors from indoors; the invisibility afforded by night; and porticos or a staircase under which one can hear (or see) something, but remain unseen. ‘Sottoporteghi’ is a typical feature of urban Venice and refers to the part of a street that is under a dwelling.⁴⁴⁴ (Toponyms in Venice differ from the traditional

⁴³⁹ Cf. the poems ‘Le Crépuscule du matin’ and ‘Le Crépuscule du soir’ from *Tableaux parisiens*.

⁴⁴⁰ Reference to Manzoni (see next section 3.2)

⁴⁴¹ Certeau and others.

⁴⁴² Despite being built on a lagoon, until the twentieth century, Venice struggled with its supply of drinking water, and used water wells to collect the rainwater. See Gianpietro Zucchetta, *Storia dell’acqua alta a Venezia: dal Medioevo all’Ottocento* (Venice: Marsilio, 2000), p.63; Mario Spinelli and Marino Folin, ‘Local flood protection measures in Venice’, in *Flooding and Environmental Challenges for Venice and its Lagoon: State of Knowledge*, ed. by Caroline Fletcher and Tom Spencer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.147–158; Anna Tüskés, ‘Comprare un pezzo di Venezia: vere da pozzo nella letteratura e nel commercio d’arte’, in *Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino*, 45 (2009), 111–132.

⁴⁴³ Another example of how Raboni shifted the focus from the common point of view and looked through a different unusual perspective is *Rappresentazione alla Croce* where the narration is from Juda, who is normally a secondary character. Giovanni Raboni, *Rappresentazione della Croce* (Milan: Garzanti, 2000).

⁴⁴⁴ For example, in Venice one can find Sottoportego dei Casin dei Nobili, Sottoportego dei Dai, Sottopotego degli Orefici, Sottoportego della Bissa etc.

toponyms in other Italian cities. For example, the Venetian terms such as ‘calle’, ‘campo’, ‘corte’, ‘crosera’ and ‘rio’, mean ‘strada’, ‘piazza’, ‘cortile’, ‘la strada principale’ and ‘canale’ in standard Italian respectively.)⁴⁴⁵ As indicated above, in a later version of the poem Raboni substituted the toponym ‘sottoporteghi’, from the Venetian dialect, to the Italian ‘sottoportici’. So, from this we can deduce the events are not happening in Milan, the usual location featured in Raboni’s works.⁴⁴⁶ However, the geographical location seems irrelevant here as the emphasis is on the fear that permeates the witnesses with their ‘orecchi avidi e timorati’. The author asks himself how many ‘frightened’ ears might have heard the fighting (lines 5-6). The focus then shifts to a hypothetical future, the collective image of a witness, and to the moment preceding death: we see a person who was afraid all his/her life, who suffered from having kept terrifying secrets but who finally confessed to a priest. The witness and the confessor’s ears are respectively both negatively depicted: ‘orecchi avidi e timorati’ and ‘l’orecchio peloso’.

Raboni, in his later works, develops the themes of fear related to monitoring, eavesdropping, control and injustice, in part echoing Manzoni and reflecting the crucial events of 1968.⁴⁴⁷ A good example of this is his experimental prose entitled ‘Economia della paura’ from *Cadenza d’inganno* (published in 1975).⁴⁴⁸ ‘Economia della paura’ (1968) is primarily concerned with the theme of control. It consists of three pieces representing a phone conversation between two lovers, a man and a woman, both wrought with fear. The man is paranoid about being spied on and their phone calls being intercepted. The absence of direct speech

⁴⁴⁵ Mario De Biasi, *Toponomastica a Venezia* (S. l: s. n., 1981).

⁴⁴⁶ ‘Milano è il mio mondo, è l’oggetto della mia esperienza. Faccio parte di quel drappello di poeti che dopo la seconda guerra mondiale hanno creduto che la poesia debba contenere quanta più realtà possibile. E la mia realtà è questa, profondamente legata alla città dove sono nato e dove ho sempre vissuto. Mi riconosco importanti radici nella cultura lombarda: da Parini a Manzoni, da Rebora a Sereni a Delio Tassa. Tutti autori che hanno un fondamento di impegno etico. Poi ci sono le vicende biografiche. Mi sono allontanato da Milano come sfollato durante la Guerra, dal ’42 al ’45. La lontananza da Milano è coincisa con la nascita della mia passione per la letteratura. Quando poi sono rientrato, la città mi ha riempito di stimoli, ha dato contenuti al mio bisogno di esprimermi, di provare emozioni. Sono milanese due volte: per nascita e per innamoramento adolescenziale’. See Carnero.

⁴⁴⁷ Foot, *Milan since the Miracle. City, Culture and Identity*, p. 193.

⁴⁴⁸ Raboni inserted two pieces of his own prose both written in 1968, ‘Economia della paura’ and ‘Partendo da boulevard Berthier’, and analysed in detail by Di Franza. See Concetta Di Franza, ‘La poesia di Giovanni Raboni tra “Economia della paura” e “Strategia della tensione”: impegno civile e politico in *Cadenza d’inganno*’, *Filologia e critica*, 29.3 (2004), 378–418; Concetta Di Franza, ‘*Cadenza d’inganno* di Giovanni Raboni: saggio di edizione critica e commentata’, *Ermeneutica letteraria*, 1 (2005), 135–66.

punctuation for their conversation in these three pieces creates the effect of intercepted phone transcripts.⁴⁴⁹ The woman is also fearful of the anaesthetic she will be given during an operation, afraid that while unconscious she will reveal her secret relationship with the man. Short, repetitive sentences in ‘Economia della paura’ create an authentic conversational phone style. Raboni’s works contain numerous examples of fear, illness, and violent death.

Topics mentioned in ‘Testimoni’ were developed throughout Raboni’s life: these include windows and elements of the urban environment, indoor and outdoor juxtaposition, darkness and night, the city as a crime setting, with its marginal characters and criminals, traffic flow throughout the city, injustice and fear at a political level, and a metaphorical plague. Some of these topics reveal Raboni’s debt to Manzoni.

3.2. Erasing spatio-temporal boundaries between space and time: visible and invisible

The poem ‘Una città come questa’ (1960/1961) appeared first in *Le case della Vetra* (1966) and then in *A tanto caro sangue* (1953-1987) where it remained unaltered from its first edition. Raboni was pessimistic about the present and the future, anticipating comprehensive degeneration of values, so he tried instead to evoke the great figures of the past. As we have seen Alessandro Manzoni was of particular importance to him, not only as the author of *I promessi sposi* but also as the poet of *Inni sacri*.

When Raboni describes an entire scene in every nuanced detail we can almost see a conscious desire to pay homage to the historicism that characterised the work of Manzoni.⁴⁵⁰ ‘Manzoni *deve* esserci, non può non esserci, nelle mie poesie – esserci, è chiaro, come un tenue degradato riflesso, o solo come un rimorso. Se non ci fosse, vorrebbe dire che non ci sono neanch’io, che le mie poesie sono, letteralmente, di qualcun altro’.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ As with ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’ and other poems from Chapter 2, the prose piece ‘Economia della paura’ falls within the framework of Raboni’s fluid discourse. However, the technique here differs as well as the purpose of their desired effect.

⁴⁵⁰ ‘The historical event, therefore, as considered by the poet [Manzoni], was something that needed to be explained, developed, disentangled, explored, for its true meaning to become apparent. It was the completion, the restitution to history of its ‘lost part’, that was the creative task facing the poet of the present day’. Ann Hallamore Caesar and Michael Caesar, *Modern Italian Literature*, Cultural History of Literature (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 90

⁴⁵¹ Raboni and Manzoni, p. 19.

Raboni expressed these sentiments in the preface to a collection of poems entitled *Raboni Manzoni*, with ten poems by Raboni plus extracts from *Storia della colonna infame* by Manzoni.⁴⁵² A representative example of the dialogue between the two poets can be seen in Raboni's poem 'Una città come questa', where there are references to the plague-spreaders and to the place of torture:

Una città come questa

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|---|
| non è per viverci, in fondo: piuttosto | 1 |
| si cammina vicino a certi muri, | 2 |
| si passa in certi vicoli (non lontani | 3 |
| dal luogo di supplizio) e parlando | 4 |
| con la voce nel naso | 5 |
| avidì, frettolosi si domanda: non è qui | 6 |
| che buttavano i loro cartocci gli untori? | 7 |

The places mentioned by Manzoni along with his motifs of illness and degradation are linked also to Raboni's own biography. In 1977 Raboni wrote about the relationship between the place where he lived, and the Lazzaretto of *I promessi sposi* and *Storia della colonna infame*. His birth next to the Lazzaretto is suggested in the theme of the metaphoric plague in Raboni's poetry:

Poi, sul conto di via San Gregorio, c'è stata un'altra scoperta: la scoperta che, per un tratto, la via dove vivevo coincideva con il perimetro del Lazzaretto – il Lazzaretto della grande peste di Milano, quella di cui parla Manzoni nei *Promessi Sposi* e nella *Storia della colonna infame*. [...] Grazie al Lazzaretto, al fatto di essere nato, per così dire, ai suoi margini, credo di essermi reso conto in un modo concreto, fisico – un modo che nessun libro, nessuna lettura mi avrebbe consentito – che la mia città non era solo quella che vedevo, case, strade, piazze, gente viva, ma era anche piena di storia, cioè di case, strade, piazze che non c'erano più e di gente che non era più viva, di gente morta. Mi sono reso conto, insomma, che la mia città visibile era piena di storia invisibile, e che questa storia era, a sua volta, piena di dolore, di minacce, di paura. Da quel momento,

⁴⁵² Adamo looks at the relationship and intersections between literature, law, and individuals and points out more authors (of narrative) who refers to *Storia della colonna infame* in Italian literature, establishing 'linea "giudiziaria"'. See Sergia Adamo, 'La giustizia del dimenticato: sulla linea giudiziaria nella letteratura italiana del Novecento', in *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture*, ed. by Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 259-288 (pp. 262-263, 272)

credo, è entrato nella mia poesia il tema della peste: peste metaforica, si capisce: peste come contagio e condanna, come circolarità e anonimato dell'ingiustizia.⁴⁵³

Looking at the structure of the poem 'Una città come questa' we can see the characteristic features of Raboni's lyrics: long phrases, full of *enjambements* that give a more colloquial feel to this poem. Fabio Magro, in his monograph about Raboni, notes the influence of historical context on poetry in general.⁴⁵⁴

During the period of economic boom and the great domestic migration to northern Italy, poets tried to find a new type of relationship with the changing reality of growing industrialisation and urbanisation. Often this led to experimentation, especially linguistically. One trend was the introduction to poetry of everyday scenes and language, mixing different registers and making the language accessible and more comprehensible to the reader.⁴⁵⁵

The structure of 'Una città come questa' is fluid and the title is integrated into the body of the poem. Raboni admitted that he used titles only in the early stages of his poems' production. In later compilations of verse he abolished all titles, always using epigraphs and a separating structure. 'Una città come questa' could be seen as an example of his gradual withdrawal from using titles.

The inversion in lines 1-2 of the poem, where the object precedes the verb, is typical of oral conversation and adds a colloquial patina from the beginning. However, within this fluid structure of seven lines that ask a question, Raboni elevates the style through vocabulary and references to Manzoni ('luogo di supplizio', 'con la voce nel naso', 'buttavano i loro cartocci gli untori'), in a similar way to the poem 'Risanamento' (analysed in Chapter 4).

The main theme of 'Una città come questa' is that the city is not a good place to live owing to contagious germs that make its inhabitants ill ('con la voce nel naso'). Apart from the intertextual reference to Manzoni indicating the places of

⁴⁵³ Raboni, I, pp. vii–viii.

⁴⁵⁴ For example, when Magro writes about Raboni's collection *Barlumi di storia* (2002), which has the word 'storia' in its title, he says: 'L'intreccio tra storia personale e *storia diciamo con l'iniziale maiuscola* attraversa tutto il libro: o meglio è più esatto dire che la seconda prospettiva entra in gioco sempre grazie alla prima, e dunque è l'ottica individuale, per forza di cose ristretta, oblique, parziale (la possibilità di essere obiettivi sta anche nell'accettazione della inevitabile visione parziale delle cose) che incrocia i fatti della storia maggiore [my emphasis]'. See Magro, *Un luogo della verità umana*, cit., p. 244.

⁴⁵⁵ Poets such as Caproni, Luzi, and Sereni, for example 'shifted noticeably towards a more conversational and accessible language in the course of their long post-war careers'. See Ann Hallamore Caesar and Michael Caesar, *Modern Italian Literature*, cit., p. 189.

torture, the city walls convey the historic layer of the poem. The adjective ‘certi’ and the impersonal verbal form in lines 2-3 accentuate the distancing in terms of timeline and also between the situation described and the reader. The city is presented as gloomy, dark, and macabre, yet Raboni is attracted by the impossibility of living in Milan. For him, this is a necessary condition for composing poetry (similar to the symbol of window):

Milano è adatta alla poesia proprio per le sue asperità, *per la sua invivibilità* [my emphasis]. Da Baudelaire in poi, è così di tutte le metropoli. C’è una reattività di cui la poesia non può fare a meno: la città è il luogo della poesia nella misura in cui è luogo del suo contrario. Quanto più la città concentra questi motivi, tanto più forte è il conflitto da cui nasce la poesia. Io credo che non potrei farne a meno. Potrei anche vivere in montagna, ma continuerei a scrivere poesie sulla città.⁴⁵⁶

The negative aspects of city life (‘invivibilità’) may be connected not only to illness and Manzoni’s plague, but also to the city’s actual political and economic situation discussed in another poem ‘Una volta’ (1958).⁴⁵⁷ The title of this poem takes the reader into the past and compares the wealthy people of the countryside to those living in the developing city. The crimes and injustice that Manzoni refers to have links with the pace and repercussions of industrialisation in the modern city featured in Raboni’s work. Post-war Milan and the evolving cityscape are associated with the increasing corruption found in the city: ‘mi convinco che tutto si complica, anche il male’ (line 12), especially at political and administrative levels (lines 14-17): ‘Il padrone | d’oggi, consiglio d’amministrazione | o gruppo di maggioranza, è un peccatore | un po’ troppo sui generis per me....’

In the poem the past, with its ‘small vices’ (as in the poem ‘I morti e i veri’ analysed in 3.3), is compared to a present that has corruption and greater immorality. The author again depicts two worlds: the present and the past, preferring the latter. The past is expressed by verbs in the *imperfetto* (‘si contavano’, ‘venivano’, ‘erano’) while the actual situation is described using the present tense (‘credo’, ‘viene’, ‘penso’, ‘è’, ‘costa’, ‘mi convinco’, ‘si complica’). The past is evoked through the origins of the protagonist: ‘ma una volta | nel Comasco o a Bergamo, da dove | viene la mia famiglia’. The past represents a purer world, now empty because economic activities have changed.

⁴⁵⁶ Paolo Di Stefano, ‘Tutti i miei cattivi pensieri’, *Corriere Della Sera*, 27 February 1994, p. 29.

⁴⁵⁷ See Appendix 3A for the full text of the poem.

He regrets and feels pity for the city and its transformation. People no longer spin silk ('non ci sia più nessuno'); no longer working in spinning mills with caterpillars. There were of course negative aspects to the past: young female employees worked in cold workshops, butterflies were killed.⁴⁵⁸ However, all these injustices seem insignificant compared to the conduct of rich people in the present and their understanding of business.

After this close reading of the poem 'Una città come questa' I now turn attention to another poem that also includes the word 'city' in its title - 'Città dall'alto' (1962), written almost at the same period. Although not referring to Milan, the poem is interesting because of Raboni's particular perspective: he observes the city from above. This elevated perspective is rare in Raboni, as he prefers horizontal lines over verticals. However this vertical perspective, unusual for Raboni, according to Certeau⁴⁵⁹ gives the reader a feeling of distance and transforms him into 'a voyeur'.

Raboni sets the scene from the beginning with the title 'Città dall'alto', thus opening the poem from an aerial view of the city. The poem uses dialogue form or theatrical monologue, one of Raboni's favourite techniques, in order to include the reader in the poetic situation and make him/her an active participant. In addition, the author tries to attract the attention of the reader by placing a verb in the imperative mood at the end of the first sentence: 'Queste strade che salgono alle mura | non hanno orizzonte, *vedi* [my emphasis]' (line 2). Later the author uses another imperative mood in lines 12-13: '*continua* a leggere | come in una mappa [my emphasis]'.

⁴⁵⁸ The plot of the poem has some similarities with that of the novel 'Seta' by Baricco, which is set in France and not in Italy. See Alessandro Baricco, *Seta* (Rome: Fandango libri, 2007).

⁴⁵⁹ 'To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp. One's body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rumble of so many differences and by the nervousness of New York traffic. When one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators. An Icarus flying above these waters, he can ignore the devices of Daedalus in mobile and endless labyrinths far below. His elevation transfigures him into a *voyeur*. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eye. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more'. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), p. 92.

The poem recalls an imaginary walk through the city (line 7: ‘ci saranno novanta passi, cento, non di più: però più giù, nel fondo della città’, lines 11-12: ‘per altri | trenta o quaranta passi’). Directions and the measure of distance link us to Raboni’s later poems analysed in Chapter 2 (NOOC, PPT) and in the poem ‘Interno esterno’ (analysed further in section 3.3). However, here we understand that the point of reference is above the city. We do not actually walk but are only reading a map, passing the cathedral preparing to go into the square, the final destination of our imaginary tour. The itinerary through the city represents not just the vertical walk down, but also the crossing of time boundaries. The time periods overlap just as the columns on the façade of the cathedral overlap: ‘la cattedrale, di cinque ordini sovrapposti’ (line 10).⁴⁶⁰ The first epoch is reflected in the reference to the Roman circus placed where currently there is a square in lines 14-15: ‘costruita sulle rocciose fondamenta del circo | romano’. The adjective ‘romano’ is emphasised rhythmically because it is the only word in line 15, the shortest line in the poem. Then the perspective shifts from the distant past to a more recent past in the last two lines with the installation of a *guillotine* in the square, the symbol of the French revolution and in general of oppressed people rebelling against the dominant classes.⁴⁶¹

Raboni stated that the city described in the poem is Lucca, even though there are some ambiguities or inaccurate details such as an incorrect number of cathedral columns in line 10 (five instead of four) and the wrong shape of the square in line 16 (San Michele square in Lucca is a quadrangle and not an ellipse).⁴⁶² However, the exact location is not significant for understanding the poem as it only helps us to visualise the scene. What is more relevant is the merging of different epochs and the interplay with the time frame, which is not linear. Viola points out that Raboni was more interested in historical recurrences:

Tempo e spazio si trasformano in prodotti culturali soggettivi; non sono più dati oggettivi con cui confrontarsi; questo permette al poeta stesso una possibile lettura della storia per ‘ricorsi’: ‘lì, tra quattrocento anni | impiantano la ghigliottina’ (lines 21-22).⁴⁶³

⁴⁶⁰ Zucco points out that the description of the cathedral fits better with Pisa’s Duomo. See Zucco in Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 1453.

⁴⁶¹ Viola quoted by Zucco in Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 1453.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

Raboni asserted that he drew parallels with repetitive historical events. He alludes to the anachronistic composition and his tendency to create the poetic event in the past, first in his poem 'L'errore coloniale', and then, in 'Città dall'alto':

La poesia è ambientata in un tribunale coloniale anglo-indiano ed è stata scritta ai tempi della guerra d'Indocina. Quindi, sullo sfondo, forse c'è anche l'idea di guerre coloniali più recenti. È il periodo in cui si è cominciato a parlare delle torture fatte dai francesi in Indocina. Però, la mia tendenza allora era sempre quella di dislocare e rendere straniare e anacronistiche le situazioni, ambientandole nel passato. || Come in *Città dall'alto*. || Sì. C'è una certa tendenza all'anacronismo.⁴⁶⁴

The characters in the poem, the poor people in the square, are depicted negatively (lines 17-20): 'dormono o si trascinano enormi, obesi, ingrassati | come capponi, rimpinzati a volontà | di carni e borgogna purché non escano dalla piazza! i poveri | della città'.

Raboni's use of insulting epithets to describe the poor evokes feelings of distaste rather than empathy. He refers three times to their obesity ('enormi, obesi, ingrassati'). They are seen as lazy and passive ('dormono o si trascinano'), appearing more like animals than human beings. He even refers to the poor as 'capponi', capons fed only to be killed. Somebody gives food and good French wine to the homeless people in order to calm the situation ('purché non escano dalla piazza!'). The poor are enclosed inside the square, like the sick in the Lazzaretto of Milan during the time of the plague. Thus an open space like a square without boundaries, seems to acquire imaginary boundaries. Zucco noted the dialogue between Raboni and Giudici, highlighting the poem 'Il benessere' by Giudici: 'Quanti hanno avuto ciò che non avevano: | un lavoro, una casa-ma poi | che l'ebbero ottenuto vi si chiusero. | Ancora per poco sarò tra voi'.⁴⁶⁵ On the other hand, it is interesting to compare the representation of the poor with 'Les Yeux des pauvres' by Baudelaire. Again we see the street and the liminal space of the café tables outside on the boulevard. Baudelaire separates two classes and through this contrast with the interior in the café and its golden furniture⁴⁶⁶ we see the poor are not allowed to be with the rich. Raboni, moving

⁴⁶⁴ 'Intervista a Giovanni Raboni' by Biondi in his dissertation 'Su *Le case della Vetra* di Giovanni Raboni' (2003) quoted by Zucco in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1441.

⁴⁶⁵ Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1453.

⁴⁶⁶ 'The boundary in absolute space between the boulevard and the café is physically porous. The lovers sit in a liminal space "in front" of the café but not entirely on the boulevard either. The

further, gives the food that poor people want,⁴⁶⁷ leaving them still separated, ‘enclosed’ and transforming into a mass.

The poem ‘Città dall’alto’ reveals an interesting intricate play with the linear and borders at a physical level. Streets are compared to rivers, where you cannot see the end, but only where they bend and then merge with the skyline. Referring to the previous chapter, the same symbol of the road as a bending river is in the last sentence of the poem NOOC: ‘Meglio | muoversi, affrettare l’incerto passo | prima che la cenere solidifichi | alla volta del gran fiume imminente | e lì svoltare, perdersi, svanire’.

Lines are also reflected in the geometric components of the poem ‘Città dall’alto’ such as a square, lines 7-8: ‘nel fondo della città | divisa in quadrati (puoi contarli); a diagonal in lines 10-11: ‘e proseguendo | a destra, in diagonale’; an ellipse in line 16: ‘grigia ellisse quieta dove’. In addition, the geometric architecture of the poem is apparent in its use of different line lengths, especially between lines 7 (twenty-five syllables) and 15 (three syllables).

The philosophical description of the city without spatial or time limits, from a broader perspective to the more detailed features of the square and its inhabitants, ends finally with the symbol of revolution, death, and injustice.

To sum up, the common feature of the motif of walking, in both poems (‘Una città come questa’ and ‘Città dall’alto’), connects the reader with the death and injustice that the characters find at the end of their destination – on the square. Sick people contacted by the plague-spreaders will die as well as the poor in the square, who in the second poem, are fed in order to be killed.

splendors of the boulevard refract back into the café at the same time as the brilliance of the café adds to the splendor of the boulevard. The relationality between the public and private (albeit commercial) spaces is powerfully suggested. [...]. Behind the building of the new boulevard lies the power of capital and of the state to open up the urban space to flows of commodities and of people as well as to the spectacle of conspicuous consumption. || But the entry of the poor disrupts this easy synthesis between the public and private spaces. The poor cannot cross that porous boundary between the public and the private because of the relativity of their social position.’ See Harvey, ‘Space as a Key Word’, p. 12.

⁴⁶⁷ Jennifer Burns points out the desire for pleasure that dominates the post-modern society. See Burns, ‘Re-thinking *Impegno* (again): Reading, Ethics, and Pleasure’, in *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture*, ed. by Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussnug (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 61–80 (p.77–79).

3.3. Inside the house: indoor elements and their opposition to the outside spaces

The third section of the chapter looks further at the interior of the house, established already to some extent through an element of the dwelling namely the window which is ‘the perfect symbol, *bringing together inside and outside, dream and reality*, self and non-self, and the spectacle, thus perceived, becomes for the poet a means of self-exploration’.⁴⁶⁸ In addition, a general description of the city as a metaphorical lazzaretto⁴⁶⁹ will provide a better understanding of the opposition between the inside and the outside spaces.

The poem ‘I morti e i veri’⁴⁷⁰ continues to blur the boundary between present and past, as we have seen with the example of a guillotine, but this time inside the house, rather than in the open space of an urban square. The poem refers to the past, but also illustrates the topic of children and ancestors. Here the birth of a child happens in the evening in darkness, accompanied by threatening weather conditions, ‘il temporale’. The situation is reminiscent of the image from the poem ‘Compleanno’. Raboni felt guilty because he was unable to fulfil the role of father. One can also read about this painful topic in the poem ‘La guerra’ (1986), which focuses on Raboni’s own father, the gratitude and veneration Raboni feels for him and for his bravery and heroism during the war,⁴⁷¹ as well as comparisons with his own role as an absentee father.⁴⁷²

The poem ‘I morti e i veri’ starts with a description of the domestic space:

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|---|
| Nella casa umida, il poco | 1 |
| ch’è asciutto sembra più asciutto ancora: | 2 |
| nelle stanze da letto al primo piano | 3 |
| il pavimento d’assi quasi bianche | 4 |

⁴⁶⁸ Hiddleston, *Baudelaire and Le Spleen de Paris*, cit., p.29.

⁴⁶⁹ Raboni considered all modern cities as ‘lazzaretti’: ‘oggi che tutte le città sono immensi lazzaretti’ in Mura, ‘La ricerca di Raboni: “Milano è emozione”’, p. 7.

⁴⁷⁰ The first version is from *Le case della Vetra* (1966) and the second, slightly shorter revised version is from *A tanto caro sangue* (1988).

⁴⁷¹ For example, Raboni points out ‘la fulminea efficienza di mio padre’ in the prose piece without title, from his last collection, about his time spent in Sant’Ambrogio. See Giovanni Raboni, *Barlumi di storia*, pp. 44–50 (p. 47).

⁴⁷² Cf. ‘vorrei tanto sapere | se anche i miei figli, qualche volta, pregano per me’, the poem ‘La guerra’, lines 21-22. Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, pp.740–741(p.740).

| | |
|------------------------------------------|------|
| non lucidate con la cera e | 5 |
| un po' distanti; sotto, nella sala | 6 |
| del biliardo, l'avorio dei birilli | 7 |
| messi in croce... (Prima o dopo ci torno | 8 |
| a vedere la casa degli amici [...]) | 9-27 |

The house's internal space in lines 1-8 triggers in the protagonist thoughts of living ancestors ('i nostri veri, gente | distratta, malinconica') as well as dead ones, in lines 8-27 ('Smorti | lungo i muri, con facce da lenoni | o da tartufi, oscuri | antenati lombardi'). It is interesting to note that the description of the house (first the floorboards in the first floor bedroom and then the billiard balls in the living room) and the thoughts it triggers, are separated syntactically. The first sentence – the description (lines 1-8) – ends with ellipses, while the remaining part of the poem (lines 8-27) – the protagonist's memories and thoughts – are enclosed in brackets.

The house is described in the present tense ('sembra') repeated at the end of line 8 in the sentence in brackets, when the protagonist explains the situation: he is now in the house, which seems abandoned (the floor has not been waxed for so long that the floorboards have shrunk and no one plays billiards). The house's humidity evokes a negative feeling. Then in brackets (lines 8-27) the protagonist tells us what used to happen in this house: first, he describes an evening when one of his friends nearly gave birth two days prematurely, and when the weather was also humid owing to a storm. The protagonist and his friend were waiting for something new, a new life, which is compared to the fresher air following the storm. The white colour of the floor and the similar ivory colour of the billiard balls highlight the pale faces of ancestors, people who used to live in this house, with their sinister characteristics: educated liars ('con facce da lenoni | o da tartufi', line 14) and merchants. Two kinds of ancestors are juxtaposed: the obscure ancestors and the real ones. The latter were not ideal owing to their 'small vices' (Zucco links these to gambling referring to the poem 'Il giocatore':⁴⁷³ 'Ma ecco, quasi | ho paura di pensarci: che sarà | qualche vizio più

⁴⁷³ Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1442.

squallido, o segreto, | o cupo – da non riderne, da avere | un altro nome, altri nomi in certe bocche...’)⁴⁷⁴ The problem here lay in the fact that the son about to be born might not realize who his real ancestors were,⁴⁷⁵ but might continue to laugh at hypocritical people from the past.

A point of interest is that the author refers to the stock theme of Milan in line 13 of the poem ‘I morti e i veri’, which is one of the rare instances that the city’s name is mentioned: ‘e s’aspettava, | di sera, che il temporale portasse | un po’ di fresco anche a *Milano* [my emphasis]’. However, when considering the body of Raboni’s work we find many references to Milan in other poems: Navigli in the poem ‘La discussione sul ponte’; some street names such as Via Mulino delle Armi, Via Senato, and the hippodrome San Siro of Milan in the aforementioned ‘Il giocatore’; other street references in ‘Il catalogo è questo’ such as Via Lazzaretto, Ponte Vetere, Arena, Cinque vie; in the poem ‘Compleanno’ the poet mentions the Cerchio del Vigorelli; a cemetery of Milan Masuccio features in the poem ‘L’album dei ricordi di guerra’ etc.

Apart from Milan, which dominates Raboni’s cityscape, other cities appear in Raboni’s poetic production. These include the aforementioned Lucca (‘Città dall’alto’, ‘Celeste’), but also Bergamo (‘Annata cattiva’, ‘Una volta’), Brianza (‘L’estate nella villa di Brianza’), Geneva (‘Au bord du lac’), Sant’Ambrogio (‘Dilazione’), Camogli (‘Anima’), Venice (‘La moria’), Rome (‘Sogno di via dei Serpenti’), Moscow (‘Il più freddo anno di grazia’) etc.

I now want to turn to the poem ‘Appartamento’ (for the full text see Appendix 3A) set in another city, taken from Raboni’s travels, and where once more the protagonist is inside the house. This poem is important for the further understanding of Raboni’s conception of the house and home. He continues with the theme of the opposition of internal and external spaces, adding more details related to the main character and corporeality highlighted in the Introduction in

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

⁴⁷⁵ Here we can infer some autobiographical details that Raboni revealed in one of his interviews – his regret that he never knew his own grandparents: ‘Se passo per via Andegari penso che lì abitavano i miei nonni che non ho mai conosciuto. Nessuno dei quattro ho conosciuto, tutti morti prima che nascessi. Questo fatto di non aver mai vissuto con i vecchi scombussola un po’, non si hanno istruzioni per la vecchiaia. E sono già nonno’. See Mura, ‘La ricerca di Raboni: “Milano è emozione”’, p. 7.

the poem 'Posto', and refers again to the symbol of the river (though not solely as a symbol, as it was in relation to Corso Buenos Aires, since here Raboni depicts a real river).

'Appartamento' (1978 or 1980) was inspired by Raboni's meeting with a Czech poet Vladimír Holan (1905-1980), a legendary recluse who lived with his wife and daughter Katja in a flat on Kampa island.⁴⁷⁶ In Serena Vitale's interview to Zucco, (Raboni's second wife and companion during his travels to Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Soviet Union) the flat where Holan lived was dark, enclosed by blinds through which the sounds of the Moldova river could be heard:

Gli portavamo in dono stecche di Camel senza filtro, ne fumava una dopo l'altra. Abitava in una casa sulla Moldova, all'isola Kampa: penombra, le imposte chiuse, era aperta soltanto (ma dietro pesanti tende scure) la porta-finestra che dava sul fiume. Non vedevamo quasi mai la moglie. Di Katja, l'unica sua figlia, affetta dalla sindrome di Down, sentivamo soltanto una nenia, come un prolungato e melodico 'ahhh...'. È la cosa che più colpì Giovanni: il buio, il rumore dell'acqua che scorreva invisibile dietro le tende, la dolce cantilena della ragazza malata.⁴⁷⁷

The poem 'Appartamento' reflects the atmosphere recalled by Vitale and includes Raboni's favoured topics: the opposition between inside and outside, the protected interior space, the window as eye to the world, darkness and dangerous weather conditions.

The poem is divided into three parts with six lines (two sentences), seven lines (one sentence) and four lines (one sentence). First the author introduces the protagonist, an old man who refuses to leave his house and wears pyjamas or a bathrobe, reflecting the peaceful and relaxing atmosphere of the house: 'Passa, dicono, le giornate | con addosso un pigiama, una vestaglia. A chi | gli consiglia d'uscire, di muoversi, altrimenti | i muscoli, alla sua età, si atrofizzano, le giunture | si bloccano, risponde | con un dolce, lento sorriso.'

The second part of the poem describes the internal space and the apartment where he lives, reads, dusts, and arranges books: 'Caverna, bunker, mucosa, | spolverati libri che nessuno | leggerà né scompiglia, | grande schermo millimetrato della concentrazione, | dell'introiezione – e dovrebbe | spegnerlo, vestirsi, arrischiare le ossa | nell'aria confusa, piena di pòlline?'

⁴⁷⁶ Raboni contributed to a verse translation into Italian of Holan's poetry. See Vladimír Holan, *A tutto silenzio. Poesie (1961-1967)*, trans. by Vlasta Fesslová, ed. by Giovanni Raboni and Marco Ceriani (Milan: Mondadori, 2005).

⁴⁷⁷ Serena Vitale quoted by Zucco in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. ciii.

The protective function of the apartment is emphasised by the words ‘caverna’ (used also in PPT to describe a cinema, dark and protective, but a relic from the past), and ‘bunker’ (denoting a defensive function, a space with a military connotation, relating perhaps to Raboni’s war experience). The internal space is protected by a mucus membrane (line 1).⁴⁷⁸ Corporeality and corporeal metaphors are often found in Raboni’s lyrical style, usually referring to the urban cityscape. In ‘Appartamento’, the mucus membrane continues the theme of physicality seen in the first part of the poem, where there are references to the muscles and joints of the old man (‘A chi | gli consiglia d’uscire, di muoversi, altrimenti | i muscoli, alla sua età, si atrofizzano, le giunture | si bloccano’). The sense of order in the house, with its dusted arranged books, providing a comfortable and safe space for the protagonist, is contrasted with the dangerous outside environment and the messy pollen-laden air (‘nell’aria confusa, piena di polline’, line 7). Often we say ‘fresh air’ when referring to outdoors, and books could be associated with dust. Yet here we see the concepts reversed (similar to the poor people who are being fed prior to being killed): the books are cleaner than the air outside. The third part of the poem focuses mostly on the outside and it is dangerous. So the snow in the darkness comes to represent the madness of nature and the world outside: ‘Va piano piano alla finestra | a vedere se nevica ancora, se continua | nel buio luminoso, *là fuori* | *l’infantile disastro del mondo* [my emphasis]’. Furthermore, in Milan where there is much less snow than in the Czech Republic, Raboni was not used to seeing snow, and the rare occasions when he saw it in Milan, can be evidenced in the aforementioned quotation. Further evidence could be drawn from his interview, where he links the act of snowing with chemicals, which are not part of the natural order:

L’altro giorno sono uscito di casa e cadeva una specie di nevischio. *Ho subito pensato che fosse neve finta, una cosa chimica.* Non si può vivere veramente bene in questo stato di sospetto, io non sento gli effetti dell’inquinamento, o m’illudo di non sentirli, ma basta l’idea per mettere a disagio. Detto questo, non saprei fare a meno di questa città,

⁴⁷⁸ ‘Mucous membranes are the moist linings of the orifices and internal parts of the body that are in continuity with the external surface. They cover, protect, and provide secretory and absorptive functions in the channels and extended pockets of the outside world that are incorporated in the body’. *The Oxford Companion to the Body*, ed. by Colin Blakemore and Sheila Jennett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) <<http://0-www.oxfordreference.com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780198524038.001.0001/acref-9780198524038>> [accessed 7 July 2016].

potrei accettare l'idea di vivere a Parigi, oppure un po' a Milano un po' a Roma'[my emphasis].⁴⁷⁹

In the third part the protagonist approaches the window and looks through it at the world (maybe it is the 'porta-finestra' mentioned by Vitale). The description by Vitale and the poetic situation in 'Appartamento' have intertextual links with the poem analysed earlier 'Come cieco con ansia...' (section 3.1). Furthermore, the unhealthy air outside connects with the metaphorical plague and 'gli untori' the poem 'Una città come questa'.

The range of lexis includes words from different registers: a colloquial style in contrast to medical and technical terms. Relative speed is important in contrasting the interior and exterior world. We now read of the slow smile of the protagonist and how slowly he approaches the window. The interior world of the house has slow motion and a relaxed and unhurried environment, while the world outside is depicted with the verbs 'muoversi' and 'nevica'.

Moving from the house in Prague, on Kampa island, back to Milan, I will continue to explore the relationship between internal and external space in the poem that is (not by accident) entitled 'Interno esterno' from the same collection *Nel grave sogno* (1982). This poem of nineteen lines consists solely of one compound sentence, where the two subjects, 'la poltrona' and 'la brace' (lines 1 and 4), are separated from their verbs 'si ferma' and 'si spegne' (lines 18, 19) by the whole body of the poem.

The title suggests the opposition of two spaces, but this misleads the reader because in fact the poem refers to three spaces: the inside of the house in lines 1-5 ('La poltrona di faggio e canna d'India | lasciata a dondolare | tra pianoforte verticale e muro, | la brace che si vede e non si vede | nel suo povero loculo di ghisa') including the staircase in lines 6-7 ('e fuori ripide le scale, nera | la balaustra'), the external space through the streets, and again the internal space, not of a private house but the public place of an Italian *cantina* with its marginal characters. Once again, as in the poem 'Città dall'alto', this poem has a vertical perspective as the protagonist is shown going down the stairs. Speed here is

⁴⁷⁹ Mura, 'La ricerca di Raboni: "Milano è emozione"', p. 7.

important, as the time dimension does not correspond to reality: in the several seconds from the moment the protagonist stood up from the rocking chair until it stopped rocking, we see many events happening. The rocking chair creates a circular composition in the poem while the extension of time is contracted to a shortened, real-time version.

The poem starts with the description of the house: someone has just stood up from the rocking chair and left the living room with its piano and fireplace. In fact, the subjects of the poem-sentence are the objects of this room: the rocking chair and the embers. In the first edition of the poem there was an even more precise picture with the negative, 'suffocating' adjective in line 3: 'in uno spazio angusto'. The narrow living room is left without people, the rocking chair slowly ceases and the embers die. A further detail, in addition to the cessation of the rocking chair and, which connects the first internal private space to death, is the fireplace, which is seen as a burial niche ('povero loculo di ghisa', line 5).

The action then shifts from the room to the staircase: similar to a fast-paced film,⁴⁸⁰ Raboni presents details of the staircase making us think that we are a part of the action and that we are going with the protagonist (or maybe the reader himself/herself, as in NOOC) first down to street level, then through the street that was transformed in the mid-1930s undergoing major urban development (Laghetto, Pasquirolo). The outside also has negative connotations owing to its description as 'greve la nebbia in questo grumo di stradine': it seems dark and one cannot see because of the fog, the streets are also as narrow as the space in the room. The only one 'happy' place in the poem is the *cantina* where police officers drink and play cards because they are pretending to enjoy themselves, although this does not reflect their true feelings. However their description, and also the actions in lines 15-17 ('intenti a fingersi intenti | al tressette, al calice, alle grazie sfiorite | della padrona'), verify that they are marginal characters. In addition, the *cantina* has epithets related to death: 'livide, fumose'.

⁴⁸⁰ Cardilli analyses the types of figural elements in a poetic text. See Cardilli, Lorenzo, 'L'immagine nel verso: per uno studio della sintassi figurale del testo poetico', *Elephant & Castle*, 15 (2016)
<http://cav.unibg.it/elephant_castle/web/uploads/saggi/90eed9f242893ba7eb90d24bdac581cce7ed0d09.pdf> [accessed 1 December 2016].

In this way all three spaces in the poem – starting from the private space, going through the common open street area and ending up at the shared public closed space of a cantina – all these three different types of an urban space are connected to death and are depicted oppressively.

3.4. Outdoor cityscape with its marginal characters: ‘non-places’ such as cinema, squares, and public transport

Having looked at houses in the poems ‘I morti e i veri’, ‘Appartamento’, and ‘Interno esterno’ and arrived at the public place of a cantina in the last poem, I will continue to study Raboni’s public areas (‘non-places’) shifting the focus to other common places as elements of urban reality, such as cinemas, squares, and public transport, which provide further evidence of Raboni’s cityscape. The cinema is one of the recurring features of Raboni’s cityscape relating to his childhood (he remembers visits to the cinema with his father and brother), to his professional career (he was employed for over a year, from January 1970 till September 1971 as a film critic for *Avvenire*) and to the transformation that occurred in Milan (mentioned in ‘Piccola passeggiata trionfale’, analysed in Chapter 2, and compared to Polyphemus who was blinded).

In Raboni’s works, one of the significant images of the cinema as a theatre of infernal representation ⁴⁸¹ is described in his early poem ‘Cinema di pomeriggio’. ⁴⁸²

Cinema di pomeriggio

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------|---|
| Quasi sempre, a quest’ora | 1 |
| arriva gente un po’ speciale (però | 2 |
| di buonissimo aspetto). Chi si siede | 3 |
| ma poi continua a cambiar posto, | 4 |
| chi sta in piedi, sul fondo della sala, e fiuta, | 5 |
| fiuta rari passaggi, la bambina | 6 |
| mezzo scema, la dama ch’entra sola, | 7 |

⁴⁸¹ Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 1758.

⁴⁸² The poem ‘Cinema di pomeriggio’ is placed in *Le case della Vetra* (1966) among poems written between 1955 and 1959. Revisited with minor amendments in *A tanto caro sangue* (1988).

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|----|
| la ragazza sciancata... Li guardo per sapere | 8 |
| che storia è la loro, chi li caccia. Quando | 9 |
| viene la luce penso come il cuore | 10 |
| gli si deve contorcere cercando | 11 |
| d'esser salvo più in là, di sprofondare | 12 |
| nel buio che torna tra un minuto. | 13 |

The protagonist of the poem 'Cinema di pomeriggio' is an observer who also came to watch a film, like the young Raboni, when he used to skip school and go instead to the cinema (mentioned in NOOC and discussed previously). There are three time markers referring not to the time period but to the duration of the day: 'pomeriggio' (in the title), 'a quest'ora' (line 1) and 'tra un minuto' (line 13). 'Special' people come to the cinema seeking protection and where they feel safe being in the dark womb of the auditorium. Among the spectators are three female characters, each with a disability (physical, mental or social) and they also represent the different ages of woman (child, adolescent girl, adult). All the people in the cinema have an excellent appearance because they are well-dressed and good-looking in terms of their physical presentation: 'di buonissimo aspetto'. Raboni the observer tried to look at people and understand their life stories. There are also some other unusual characters: they keep changing seats, or they prefer to stand waiting for something unusual to happen in the film. They arrive and the protagonist-observer, instead of watching the film, seems to ponder on their personal stories. He explores the cinema-goers: their feelings, their postures, whether seated or standing. He feels their hearts writhe when the lights go up and he understands their desire to withdraw deep into darkness in order to feel protected (just as Raboni himself was protected by the window pane of his childhood). The characters who are escaping ('chi li caccia') between light and dark, between reality and the fictional world of film, are close to feeling safe. Soon, in the darkness, they will feel comfortable and tranquil.

Another typology of shared space and element of the cityscape is the square, which Raboni uses frequently in his body of work, as seen already in the poem 'Città dall'alto'. In addition, his first published collection *Le case della Vetra* (1966) features the square: the Piazza della Vetra in the seventeenth century, was

a place of execution for heretics and people accused of spreading the plague. Vetra was the name of the channel that ran through the square and was polluted by the tanners working in that area. At the beginning of the twentieth century the area was cleared, the houses demolished, and the square became a public place again.

I now explore the topic of squares in Raboni's *oeuvre* with analysis, not of a poem, but a short piece of prose entitled 'In una piazza quadrata', from *La fossa di Cherubino* (1980).⁴⁸³ It is interesting not only because it deals with the topic of the piazza, but also for its architectural composition, with the form resembling the shape of a square.

What is immediately noticeable, even without reading it, is that the text is shaped like a *piazza quadrata*.⁴⁸⁴ In the middle of the page there is one paragraph, one sentence of text comprising eighteen lines, lacking almost any punctuation (only one semicolon, four commas and the final full stop). The text, a geometric square, reads like a stream of consciousness, which explains the lack of punctuation. The square in the text is a symbol of boundaries between the old and new city, between the past and the present. The space is also divided horizontally. In the middle of the square are several flagpoles with flags fluttering in the wind. The image of flags belonging to the past alludes to martial glory and arms ('era una piazza d'armi').⁴⁸⁵ The wind has links with the hill above, another space from the past, because an old city is situated there. The old city is difficult to see since it is far away and now without lights ('i suoi palazzi gotici sono spenti'),⁴⁸⁶ but also because its churches became blackened over time. The literal meaning of light overlaps with a more symbolic meaning. Immense Gothic buildings with all their beauty, remain in the past without light and life, and are substituted by cafes ('le luci dei caffè cominciano ad

⁴⁸³ See for the full text Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 502.

⁴⁸⁴ It might be interesting to trace the similar link between the shape of square and the city (not square) expressed by Palazzeschi in 'La città del Sole Mio': '*In forma di quadrato perfetto, | si estende la città*'[my emphasis]. See Palazzeschi, p. 223.

⁴⁸⁵ Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 502.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

accendersi')⁴⁸⁷ and by small rooms with walls made of paper, signifying their lack of substance ('nella sua stanza di carta').⁴⁸⁸

Overall, there are three different spaces in this little piece of prose. (See the splitting of the elements belonging to each area in the table below.) First, the square piazza with its fluttering flags, where the protagonist sits drinking his glass of *Pernod*, and where twilight gradually gives way not to darkness, but to cafes with their lights. This space is the boundary between the present and the past. The second space is the city on the hill with its former beauty, now transformed into blackened churches and shabby Gothic buildings.

Personification of the Gothic buildings is contrasted with the immobile, although still beloved, woman, who 'sta immobile nella sua stanza di carta come una lunga pallida cera, non batte gli occhi e non respira'.⁴⁸⁹ The woman, here compared to a candle, does not seem alive, neither breathing nor blinking. The candle closes the circle of the three different spaces, connecting the third space of the small room with paper walls to the old city, because candles are associated with churches, where long pale candles are often seen standing immobile.⁴⁹⁰ In this circle of spaces, the protagonist is sitting in the square, between the old city and the new city ('una specie di terra di nessuno tra città vecchia e città nuova')⁴⁹¹ and wants neither to move, nor go anywhere. He is just an observer. However, the fact that the new city does not attract him at all is highlighted twice, while describing the woman he loves and who loves him. He admits that he is glad she is far away ('per fortuna') and does not want to be there with her for all the gold in the world ('per tutto l'oro del mondo').⁴⁹²

Table 14. Three spaces in the the text 'In una piazza quadrata' and the elements that belong to each of them

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ A candle can be also a reference to Baudelaire's poème en prose 'Les Fenêtres'. According to Hiddlestone, 'the candle in the room increases the impression of spacial depth'. Hiddlestone, Baudelaire and *Le Spleen de Paris*, cit., p.29.

⁴⁹¹ Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 502.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

| Una piazza quadrata | Città vecchia | Città nuova |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| -è quasi buio (transformation) -il pomeriggio d'ottobre -alcune bandiere -sventolano sui pennoni -una piazza d'armi -in altri tempi -confine -una specie di terra di nessuno -tra città vecchia e città nuova -le luci dei caffè cominciano ad accendersi -il regolare piatto diagramma dell'amore -sembrare -non meno adorabile -non meno giallina e priva di trasparenze -il bicchiere del pernod -sto seduto -la luce rossa e obliqua | -in alto sulla collina -non si vede -i palazzi gotici sono spenti -le chiese nere | -lontano per fortuna -molto lontano da qui -dove non vorrei essere -per tutto l'oro del mondo -la donna che amo mi ama -sta immobile -la stanza di carta -lunga pallida cera -non batte gli occhi -non respira -meno adorabile -meno giallina -priva di trasparenze |

The composition of this square text-sentence is also circular. It starts with the square and flags, and finishes with the square, flags, and the glass of *Pernod*. From the October afternoon and near darkness, we join the protagonist looking towards the lights of the café as they start to come on, and progress at the end of the text to the red and oblique light.

The second example of where the image of the square is central, referring to a

site of tragedy, is dedicated to the events of Piazza Fontana. As already explained, Raboni introduces many historical events into his work. In the poem 'Ogni tanto succede', from his last collection *Barlumi di storia* (2002), Raboni regrets that people have such short memories and tend to forget the past. Places can trigger memories of a horrible past and events that happened: Raboni's use of places to evoke the past, as if 'walls could speak' can be found in many of his works.

The terrorist attack on the Piazza Fontana was the subject of one of the longest legal investigations in modern Italian history.⁴⁹³ Raboni trained as a lawyer, and therefore his understanding extends beyond his personal interpretation, to an advanced legal perspective. From 12 December 1969 till 12 March 2004 there were nine separate investigations, yet those responsible have never been identified. The explosion at the Banca Nazionale Agricola on Friday, 12 December 1969 resulted in seventeen deaths and eighty-eight injured. It was a landmark case, involving the Italian secret services, secret agents, circles of neo-fascists and ultranationalists. People were scared and there was a climate of fear and injustice.⁴⁹⁴ Raboni had previously written about this case in the poem 'L'alibi del morto' (1970), when he discussed the sudden suspicious death of the first suspect Giuseppe Pinelli.⁴⁹⁵

There were many responses in art and literature to this tragic event and ensuing injustice: Dario Fo, Camilla Cederna, Pier Paolo Pasolini, M.H. Enzensberg and Giacomo di Girolamo.⁴⁹⁶ One of the most recent visual interpretations is the film by Marco Tullio Giordana *Romanzo di una strage* (2012).⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹³ See Foot, 'The Strategy of Tension and Terrorism. Piazza Fontana and the "Moro Case"', pp. 184–203; Odoardo Ascari, *Accusa: reato di strage. La storia di piazza Fontana* (Milan: Editoriale Nuova, 1979).

⁴⁹⁴ Marco Nozza, *Il pistolero: da Piazza Fontana, trent'anni di storia raccontati da un grande cronista* (Milan: Il saggiatore, 2007).

⁴⁹⁵ Giuseppe Carrara, 'Piazza Fontana, la morte di Pinelli e la poesia', *L'anonimo*, 2014 <<http://lanonimo-blog.blogspot.ru/2014/12/piazza-fontana-la-morte-di-pinelli-e-la.html>> [accessed 7 April 2016].

⁴⁹⁶ Dario Fo, *Morte accidentale di un anarchico: due atti*, ed. by Franca Rame (Turin: Einaudi, 2004); Camilla Cederna, *Pinelli: una finestra sulla strage* (Milan: Net, 2004); Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Cos'è questo golpe?', *Corriere della Sera*, 14 November 1974, p. 3; Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Daniela Zuffellato, *Prospettive sulla guerra civile* (Turin: Einaudi, 1994); Giacomo Di Girolamo, *Dormono sulla collina: 1969-2014* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2014).

⁴⁹⁷ *Romanzo di una strage*, dir. by Marco Tullio Giordana (01 Distributor, 2012).

It is probable that Raboni was inspired by the eighth investigation, in 2001, into this terrorist outrage when writing ‘Ogni tanto succede’. The poem consists of fifteen lines and the word ‘piazza’ occurs five times (lines 2, 3, 4, 10, 11). Here, for the author, the piazza loses the concept of the square⁴⁹⁸ (‘come se ormai nessuna geometria | fosse non dico praticabile | ma neanche concepibile’) and its boundaries are almost absent (‘il suo perimetro sfuggente’).⁴⁹⁹ There are only four puny trees left: ‘con le sue quattro piante stente’. The square with weak trees, traditionally the symbol of life, and with absent boundaries is deprived even of its physical dimensions. At the end the author claims that what actually remains of the square is just its name and thoughts about death: ‘e non per tutti | ma solo per chi da tempo coltiva | più pensieri di morte che di vita’.

Historical events inform many of Raboni’s other works, and the next piece of prose for my analysis will also concern a tragic event, though not related to a legal case, – the beginning of the Second World War. My focus now turns to another element of urban public space – public transport.

As described in Chapter 2, movement is one of the central topics of Raboni’s lyric. It can refer to different kinds of movement: walks through the city (poems ‘Ci sono sere che vorrei guardare’, ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’, prose pieces ‘Piccola passeggiata trionfale’ and articles for guide books). Although Raboni was ‘un pedone incallito’,⁵⁰⁰ he often used the image of public transport (trams) and traffic lights to convey movement. Traffic and public transport are integral to the urban environment, serving as the backdrop to Raboni’s poems and symbolising the particular relationship he had with the city. Raboni often focuses on trams and other elements of the urban landscape such as the railway station

⁴⁹⁸ The idea of a changed function of the square is similar to the imprisonment of poor people in ‘Città dall’alto’.

⁴⁹⁹ ‘[A] partire da un assetto tutto sommato ben proporzionato ed equilibrato, con i quattro lati non perfettamente ortogonali ma con un centro di gravitazione attorno alla fontana del Piermarini, Piazza Fontana [...] ha subito in particolare nel XX secolo numerose trasformazioni. Se fu a causa dell’abbattimento dell’isolato di via Alciato (1960) che si aprì per così dire una specie di falla nel lato est, sud-est, della piazza, che ne sbilanciò completamente la conformazione originaria e rese (e rende) in effetti problematica qualsiasi descrizione “geometrica” dei suoi spazi e del suo perimetro, ad innescare le varie trasformazioni furono in particolare i bombardamenti avvenuti nel corso della Seconda guerra mondiale’. See Fabio Magro, ‘Sulla Milano dell’ultimo Raboni. Una specie di congedo’, *L’Ulisse*, 14 (2011), 73–81, p. 76.

⁵⁰⁰ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Un fascino ritrovato’, p. 46.

and other kinds of public transport. The symbolic nature of public transport, and in particular that of trams, is clearly seen in *Versi guerrieri e amorosi* (1984) and the third section of the last collection by Raboni *Barlumi di storia* (2002) – these two pieces will be the focus of my analysis while illustrating Raboni's image of public transport.⁵⁰¹

The prose piece from *Versi guerrieri e amorosi* refers to the first adjective of the collection: war is associated with the past, while love with the present. It is dedicated to Raboni's father and was even entitled initially, 'Mio padre. Alla penultima fermata'. One of Raboni's techniques is to introduce numbers in the text, but cryptically.⁵⁰² Zucco, in his commentary, rebuilt the detailed historical backdrop mentioned in this prose and identified the day it was written as 11 June 1984 in the sentence 'Sono passati quarantaquattro anni, un mese e un giorno'. However, this date contradicts the last sentence because Benito Mussolini announced Italy's entry into the Second World War on 10 June of 1940 at 6 pm and not 11 June.⁵⁰³ This represents the culmination of the prose: 'In casa, nella penombra del cortile, una mano sta già toccando la manopola di bachelite della radio'.

The announcement of war will start a new period of life for everyone and will ruin the daily routine of the protagonist, Raboni's father. Calm repetition of the daily routine is expressed in several elements of the text: his father boards the tram at the forward door reserved for season ticket holders and invalids ('è appena salito sull'1 dalla porta anteriore riservata agli abbonati e probabilmente agli invalidi esibendo al manovratore la sua tessera valida per l'intera rete tranviaria'). He performs the same action that he used to do in the tram: standing, holding a leather strap, and looking through the window. Twice in the second paragraph the author repeats the expression 'come di consueto' when describing the father: 'Come di consueto, non è né in ritardo né in anticipo. [...] perché guarda, come di consueto, dall'altra parte'.

⁵⁰¹ Additionally, further analysis of Raboni's poem 'Per Imbarcadero' that deals also with the theme of transport, but it is placed in Venice, is the focus of the article written by Magro. See Fabio Magro, 'Per Imbarcadero', *l'immaginazione*, 289 (2015), 21–22.

⁵⁰² The first prose piece from 'Piccola passeggiata trionfale' deals with numbers referring to dates also in this way: using music terms, months and years referring to the distance and geographical dimension but not time dimension.

⁵⁰³ Zucco in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1644.

The action of his father boarding the tram is described twice. First, in the opening paragraph when his father is introduced to the reader: ‘Mio padre, elegante e asciutto come un ufficiale di legno traforato, è appena salito sull’1 dalla porta anteriore riservata agli abbonati e probabilmente agli invalidi esibendo al manovratore la sua tessera valida per l’intera rete tranviaria’. Then the second paragraph starts similarly with the same action, repeating many details describing the protagonist boarding the tram through the forward door: ‘Mio padre sale dalla porta anteriore, vietata ai non abbonati e ai non ancora invalidi, su una vettura della linea tranviaria numero 1.’ However, there are some differences, which Raboni obviously wanted to emphasise by separating these two apparently similar phrases with one sentence and placing them into two different paragraphs. The first example describes his father’s appearance; he is slim (‘asciutto’) and elegant as are other passers-by (they wear hats). His father does not even seem real as he is compared to a toy soldier: ‘come un ufficiale di legno traforato’. In addition, his father’s first action of boarding the tram is presented using the *passato prossimo* (‘è appena salito’) while in the second phrase the verb is used in the present, maybe even in the *presente storico* (‘sale’): the stress therefore, is not on the action itself, but on how it is happening. In fact, the striking difference between these two phrases relates to the ‘porta anteriore’ and especially the people who can access it: ‘probabilmente invalidi’ versus ‘non ancora invalidi’. The second sentence refers to imminent military events that would soon create many invalids.

The fact that his father notices neither the trees nor their absence unites him with others who pay no attention to the familiar green colour of the tram and taxis. This demonstrates that everyone has a routine and repetitive life that soon will be ruined, but also illustrates Raboni’s recurring theme that people do not pay attention to what goes on around them.⁵⁰⁴

The first sentence refers to the night between 15 and 16 August 1943 when the theatre La Scala was bombed. Since the poetic situation in the text is set on 11 (or 10) June 1940, the theatre had not yet been bombed, so the façade is intact: ‘nella facciata del teatro non si vede una sola crepa’. The worst period for Milan was August 1943, several weeks after the arrest of Benito Mussolini, when half

⁵⁰⁴ Similarly to passers-by from PPT.

the city was destroyed by British bombing. The first bombings occurred at night between 7 and 8 August: 'Fra tre anni, un mese e ventisette giorni non ci saranno più platani'. In fact, the population of plane trees decreased dramatically (from 80.000 to 30.000).⁵⁰⁵

In the last paragraph, for the third time, the author repeats adjectives qualifying light when referring to the intense bombing raids ('La luce è sempre più bianca e fissa'). The fixed white light of the raids blocks out the memory of the previously happy and untouched lives of citizens. The next four sentences, starting with the same grammatical verbal form 'mancano', prepare for the culmination of the text, when war was announced on the radio. These four sentences measure time using parallelism through different elements: using firstly the tram stops ('Mancano tre fermate'); secondly, giving precision with real-time measurements in minutes and seconds ('Mancano dodici minuti e diciannove secondi') – that he refuses to use in the first paragraph ('Non è passato neanche un minuto'); thirdly, through time measurements again, but on a larger scale of months and years and merging years with weather conditions and reference to the machine-gun fire of American planes during the last few months of the war ('Mancano quattro anni, dieci mesi e quindici giorni, un metro e trentasei centimetri di neve, un numero imprecisabile di mitragliamenti a bassa quota'); fourthly, by counting time in steps, referring to the house the protagonist enters at the end of the poem ('Mancano ventisette gradini').

The tram in this context represents a timeline, measured through the stops of the tram and following its normal route. Tram 1 passes through Raboni's favourite area of Milan, where he lived before the war. His father, one of the passengers on the tram, was a military hero to Raboni because of the daily trips from Milan to Sant'Ambrogio where Raboni lived. During this dangerous time, making trips to their countryside house, accomplishing his journey in wartime conditions, was an act of bravery.

Here, the tram can be seen to symbolise an observation point with its windows through which one can see the plane trees outside and its doors that brush their leaves. This image, as well as the quiet daily routine of all passengers and

⁵⁰⁵ Camilla Cederna, Marilea Somarè, and Martina Lombardi, *Milano in guerra* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979); Achille Rastelli, *Bombe sulla città: gli attacchi aerei alleati, le vittime civili a Milano* (Milan: Mursia, 2004); Zucco in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1644.

passers-by, who do not think that anything might change and ruin the equilibrium of their lives, will soon belong to the past ('un giorno, un giorno di questo stesso secolo').

Raboni also uses the tram as a symbol in his poetry, as for example, in four poems from the third section of *Barlumi di storia* (2002). In the first poems there is no mention of the word tram, even though it is the central subject of these four lyrics. The author tells us in the second sentence that he realises he is being vague when he says: 'Uno dei due va da una parte, | l'altro dall'altra... Troppo vago, | me ne rendo conto'. We see the two subjects because the verb 'va' (andare) can also refer to a person, and trams become personified. The protagonist, the lyrical 'I', is the observer and he tries to find the geographical point of reference, trying to explain the direction of both trams, one of which goes on the left and the other on the right. The fact that two trams (or people, or something else, since it is not clear initially what he is speaking about) go in opposite directions does not require a further explanation as the author wants to look philosophically at the concept of the space dimension and its deeper meaning through the movement of the tram, when he adds a question: 'Forse meglio: | uno dei due va a destra, | l'altro a sinistra – *ma di che cosa* [my emphasis]?'

Then there are more precise references to location, first to the place where Raboni lived, with 'viale Piave' on the left side and 'viale Vittorio Veneto' on his right. The author remembers times when he used to live 'fra i bastioni e i navigli'. We sense that the author is trying to be sincere with the reader. This use of colloquial expressions, and verbs in the first person plural, is inclusive. He uses the interrogative suggesting a dialogue with the reader (even if he does not expect an answer) – the technique that Raboni uses also in his other writings, as stated before, for example in NOOC.

Lines 7-21 are full of Milanese topography (lines 16-21 list places in Milan), places that one can see while travelling on tram 29 (or 30). In the last three lines the author returns to his initial statement creating a circular composition with the indirect questions: 'mai, mai che io riesca a ricordarmi| quale va e quale viene, | quale dei due va da una parte, | quale dall'altra...'

In the second poem the relationship with the tram goes beyond the number of lines (29 and 30) because the circular route around the city of both trams, for passengers, merges into one tram: the tram that brings you to work in the morning (lines 4-5) and brings you back home in the evening (lines 6-7).

In the third poem Raboni describes the trams' itinerary. He describes the recurrent theme in a very simple way, using references to clockwise and anti-clockwise directions, and finally introducing the key element: the circular itinerary of trams. The author defines the trams as twins: 'Molto semplicemente | (cosa c'è di più semplice di un cerchio?) | sia l'uno che l'altro, sia il trenta | che il suo gemello ventinove | girano in cerchio intorno alla città, uno (ma quale?) in senso orario, | l'altro in senso antiorario' (lines 1-7). Here again we see his use of the technique of theatrical monologue using rhetorical questions.

To summarise the findings from this section, both squares and public transport open a historical dimension in Raboni's writings, where time and distance measurements are all merged together in a unique unusual chronotopos. In addition, not only are the time boundaries merged, but the space acquires non-traditional lines. A square, that the reader can visualise even on the page, serves as a window to the past, or as a mediator between the present and the past rather than a boundaryless space. On one hand, we see a flâneur who needs the crowd and feels comfortable among other passengers in the tram. Only through movement and observing the crowd does he actually live the urban life. The tram represents movement, a continuation of the process of walking analysed in Chapter 2. On the other hand, life in the city makes people, this crowd, 'ill' or in a certain way disabled.

In this chapter I looked at some of the key elements of Raboni's cityscape such as windows, apartments and domestic space in general, public internal spaces such as cantinas, cinemas, and public transitory spaces including squares, and trams. The analysis focused on fifteen texts: thirteen poems and two short prose writings spread across Raboni's career.

From walking through Porta Venezia and mapping Raboni's biographical topography in Chapter 2, the focus has shifted from a long walk – passeggiata – to the details that create a kaleidoscopic image of Milan in Raboni's oeuvre. One can still trace movement as an essential tool for perception of the urban reality, be it trams or public transport, walk or passeggiata, crossing through Piazza Fontana, heading from the house to the cantina, or even the movement towards the window by the protagonist in the poem 'Appartamento'.

Windows represent, not just a boundary between the inside (domestic) and the outside space, between the poet and real urban life, but also serve as a metaphor for composing poetry, as in Baudelaire's *Windows*. Raboni admits that he lives his life by observing it through the window. The poet can see outside, but can also look through time and see invisible and past events. Thus, for him windows are not solely a spatial boundary, but a temporal one. They protect the observer from the world and also frame his perception. Drawing on the findings from the second and the third chapters and tracing in these chapters some references to Baudelaire, I will next add more detail to the image of city by looking at the dialogue between two poets and their metropolitan realities.

Chapter 4. Giovanni Raboni as a translator of Baudelaire

*Le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.
(Baudelaire, 'L'albatros')⁵⁰⁶*

*Il Poeta è come lui, principe delle nubi
che sta con l'uragano e ride degli arcieri;
esule in terra fra gli scherni, impediscono
che cammini le sue ali di gigante.
(Baudelaire, 'L'albatro', trans. by Raboni)⁵⁰⁷*

Giovanni Raboni played an important role in the literary and cultural life of the second half of the twentieth century, contributing to it not only with his own poems, his work as a literary critic, collaboration with the theatre and his cinema reviews, but also with his translations. After having looked at the cityscape in Raboni's own writings, both from his earlier period and that of a mature poet, I turn now to his translations. The focus of this chapter is on the relationship between Raboni as reader and translator of Baudelaire and Raboni the poet, especially in terms of the concept of representation of the city. That goal will be achieved through the analysis of the evolution of Raboni's poetic translation of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* and the identification of possible intertextual connections between Baudelaire and Raboni. Some references to Baudelaire have been mentioned already during the analysis in previous chapters such as the image of the window, the marginality of the characters, the choice of dusk as borderline daytime, for example. In order to complement my analysis of Raboni's cityscape, in this chapter I will first establish and analyse Raboni's approach to translation and the techniques that will facilitate the exploration of two poems from five Italian editions of *Les Fleurs du Mal* translated by Raboni. Then I will analyse the possible echoes found in translations of Raboni's 'Nella piazza? sul corso? Chi lo sa' and 'Risanamento'. This analysis will demonstrate

⁵⁰⁶ Charles Baudelaire, *I fiori del male e altre poesie*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Turin: Einaudi, 1999), p.12.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., p.13.

the interrelationship between Raboni the poet and Raboni the translator,⁵⁰⁸ in terms of thematic choice and city representation and also on some other levels of extra-linguistic features such as rhyme, rhythm, metrics and syntax.

Close reading of re-translated poems by Baudelaire from five renderings by Raboni will help to trace both the development of Raboni's translation skills, his translation techniques as well as his understanding of the act of translation, and will illustrate the extent to which Baudelaire left a mark on Raboni's lyric and his concept of the city. The work on Baudelaire and the five editions of *I fiori del male* represents more than twenty five years of Raboni's life as he started translating Baudelaire in 1966 and never stopped.

Many factors, in addition to the translator's work, influence the art of translation. 'Publishing houses' marketing strategies'⁵⁰⁹ and the context of the target audience are two possible examples among many. The dynamics in Raboni's renderings between 1973 (first edition) and 1999 (the fifth edition) reflect on the one hand, linguistic⁵¹⁰ and formal transformations that occurred during this period of Italian literature since 'a retranslation is always evidence of a need to modernize and actualize a given text in the light of changes in the cultural discourse of the domestic constituency',⁵¹¹ and on the other hand, the evolution of Raboni the poet owing to the fact that every translation contributes not only to a national literature, but becomes a part of a personal experience of the

⁵⁰⁸ Many studies focus on the impact of the translation activity by the Italian poets and writers in the post-war period in Italy on their own literary production. For example, the case of Fortini: 'Le traduzioni di Fortini non si comprendono se non come parte della sua produzione poetica e critica, e per converso le poesie e saggi di quest'autore sono da considerarsi espressione di un più ampio "gesto traduttivo"'. See Irene Fantappiè, 'Cinque tesi sulla traduzione in Fortini. *Sélection e marquage* in "Il ladro di ciliegie"' in *Letteratura italiana e tedesca 1945-1970: Campi, polinestii, transfer = Deutsche und italienische Literatur 1945-1970: Felder, Polysysteme, Transfer*, ed. by Irene Fantappiè and Michele Sisto (Rome: Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici, 2013), pp.148-168, (p.164).

⁵⁰⁹ Daniela La Penna, 'Historicizing Value, Negotiating Visibility: English and Italian Poetic Canons in Translation', in *Twentieth-Century Poetic Translation: Literary Cultures in Italian and English*, by Daniela Caselli and Daniela La Penna (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 1–22 (p. 4).

⁵¹⁰ 'Geographically transient and historically transitory in nature, translation is an active transactional reading practice between cultures; as such, translation is a cultural activity which can be used to measure and assess the ways in which literary traditions are shaped by narratives of national identity. Most importantly, translation demonstrates how the relationships between tradition and identity condition the production of literary canons, both domestic and foreign. When acting as a vehicle for literary innovation in the receiving culture, translation can either propel the literary system in question towards a tipping point, or highlight its need for renewal, forcing it to reconsider its defining aesthetic factors'. See La Penna, p. 4.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

translator.⁵¹² Therefore, it seems important to analyse renderings from different editions, which are not necessarily tautological.⁵¹³ Concerning his evolving translations over the five different editions of *I fiori del male*, Raboni observed, ‘studiando le successive versioni o stesure si potrebbero scoprire parecchie cose sia sulla mia personale evoluzione sia su quella dell’idea di poesia nella cultura italiana durante i decenni Settanta, Ottanta e Novanta’.⁵¹⁴

4.1. Raboni the translator of *Les Fleurs du Mal* and his translation techniques

As Jacob Blakesly points out, Raboni was a very prolific translator compared to other Italian poet-translators.⁵¹⁵ Luca Daino highlights the unique translation experience of Raboni which is the result both of the quantity and the quality of his translations.⁵¹⁶ Raboni translated from different languages, poets and writers from different epochs, in different genres, in prose, in verse, and for the theatre. He translated mostly from French (Proust, Baudelaire, Apollinaire, Flaubert, Céline, Claudel, Hugo), but also from English (T.S. Eliot and Shakespeare) to mention just a few. However, in his youth he translated from Latin and English, while his first professional work as a translator was Flaubert’s *L’éducation sentimentale* in 1966.⁵¹⁷ He often translated different authors concurrently. For instance, in October 1986 his second body of work on Proust (*La parte di*

⁵¹² ‘Ogni traduzione è non solo un pezzo di storia linguistica nella cornice di una certa letteratura nazionale ma un momento autobiografico, un diario, se vogliamo essere precisi’. See Nicola Gardini, *Com’è fatta una poesia? Introduzione alla scrittura in versi* (Milan: Sironi Editore, 2007), p. 155. See also Susan Bassnett and Alejandra Pizarnik, *Exchanging Lives: Poems and Translations* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2002).

⁵¹³ ‘With each reading and each (re)translation, the source text is pluralized and one new and possible text comes to light. In this sense, it is the impermanence of the original, and not the deficiency of translation, which gives impulse to the reiterative act of retranslation’. See Sharon Deane-Cox, *Retranslation: Translation, Literature and Reinterpretation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 191–192.

⁵¹⁴ Dolfi, ‘Giovanni Raboni (ovvero tradurre per amore)’, p. 626.

⁵¹⁵ ‘Raboni translated twenty works in his career, more than almost all poet-translators’. See Jacob Blakesley, *Modern Italian Poets: Translators of the Impossible* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), p. 117.

⁵¹⁶ ‘It is useful to consider his [Raboni’s] activity as a translator, which is unique in both quantity and quality amongst Italian writers’. See Luca Daino, ‘Raboni and the Anglo-Saxon Modernism’, *ReadingItaly*, 2014 <<https://readingitaly.wordpress.com/2014/12/09/giovanni-raboni-critics-corner/>> [accessed 21 January 2015].

⁵¹⁷ Gustave Flaubert, *L’educazione sentimentale*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Milan: Garzanti, 1966).

Guermites, Sodoma e Gomorra I) was published and in 1987 his second edition of *I fiori del male* was edited. In 1994, Raboni's translation of *À la recherche du temps perdu* was awarded the Aristeion Prize as he was the first Italian translator to translate the whole work individually.⁵¹⁸ Seven translators had worked for the previous edition for *Einaudi*.⁵¹⁹

Raboni's long-term prose translation experience of Proust enriched his own literary works.⁵²⁰ Zucco in the *Apparato critico* found multiple examples of intertextuality between Raboni and Proust.⁵²¹ For instance, Raboni's poem 'Dall'altare nell'ombra' (1980) borrows its title from Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann*. In addition, in this poem Zucco sees also a possible reference to Kafka's *The Trial* with the metaphor 'lampi d'argento' in line 4.⁵²²

Raboni himself commented on the influence that translating *À la recherche* had on his own writing, as well as the combined influence of such disparate writers as Proust and Kafka in respect of his experiments in prose: 'Sicuramente [la traduzione di Proust ha influito] sulle mie prose, quelle della *Fossa di Cherubino*: penso che vengano da Proust e da Kafka. Un tentativo un po' strano di intrecciare i due, almeno così le vedo adesso che le ho riprese in mano'.⁵²³ In 1980 Raboni published his first book of prose *La fossa di Cherubino*, which

⁵¹⁸ See an article by Alexandra Zerkaleva about new Russian translations of classics such as Homer, Balzac, Shakespeare, Kafka and Proust in a literary online journal dedicated to books and literary theory in Russia and abroad entitled 'Gorky'. An interesting fact is that Proust has never been translated into Russian by one translator only. Elena Baevskaya, who is now working on a new rendering, admits like Raboni the benefits gained from her experience of translating poets like Baudelaire and Apollinaire. She comments not only about the very poetic language that combine simple and high registers, similar to Baudelaire's poems-en-prose, but she also writes about the syntax: 'Синтаксис в «Поисках» в самом деле сложный — каждую длинную фразу необходимо перестраивать согласно русскому синтаксису и при этом стараться не потерять ритма и гармонии'. ['The syntax in *La Recherche* is complex, so that every lengthy sentence needs reconstructing according to Russian syntax, while trying at the same time, not to lose the rhythm and harmony']. Alexandra Zerkaleva, 'Kto i zachem delaet novye perevody klassiki = [Who and why make new translations of classics]', *Gorkiy*, Kontekst, 2016 <<https://gorkiy.media/context/kto-i-zachem-delaet-novye-perevody-klassiki/>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

⁵¹⁹ Natalia Ginzburg, Franco Calamandrei and Nicoletta Neri, Mario Bonfantini, Elena Giolitti, Paolo Serini, Franco Fortini, and Giorgio Caproni. See a separate entry for each volume in the bibliography.

⁵²⁰ Giovanni Raboni, *La conversione perpetua e altri scritti su Marcel Proust*, ed. by Giulia Raboni (Parma: MUP, 2015); Polese, Ranieri, 'Con Proust nel corso del tempo', *Corriere della Sera*, 22 November 1993, p. 27.

⁵²¹ Polese, Ranieri, 'Con Proust nel corso del tempo', *Corriere della Sera*, 22 November 1993, p. 27.

⁵²² Zucco in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1559.

⁵²³ Ibid.

consists of twelve short stories. (One of them – ‘In una piazza quadrata’ – has been analysed in Chapter 3.) In the foreword Raboni himself questioned how best to define his own genre of prose: ‘Ho scritto dodici racconti (o prose, o frammenti di romanzo) raccolti in questo volume tra l’inverno del ’67 e l’autunno del ’69’.⁵²⁴ Furthermore, regarding the genre and the influence of Baudelaire, it is important to remember that Baudelaire was the inventor of *petites poèmes en prose*, the genre that Raboni adopts, especially in his PPT, as discussed in Chapter 2. According to the founder of this genre, the short prose passages with their internal rhythm and harmony were the most appropriate illustration of urban life:

Who among us has not dreamt, in a moment of ambition, of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and without rhyme, supple and staccato enough to adapt to the lyrical stirrings of the soul, the indulgence of dreams, and the sudden leaps of consciousness. This obsessive ideal is above all a child of the experience of giant cities, of the intersection of their myriad relations.⁵²⁵

From Raboni’s quotation about the genre of his writings it is possible to see that he analysed his own work trying to look at it through the prism of a critic of literature and a philologist, expressing his doubts about the genre, describing the composition and the exact time period. Regarding translation Raboni underlined the difference between the translator and the theorist of translation⁵²⁶ and was sceptical about a possible ‘scientific’ approach in describing the act of translation; it was an art for him, ‘consanguineous’ to proper writing:

Anche se sono stati fatti, nel tempo, molti e non sempre maldestri tentativi di fornirla di uno statuto ‘scientifico’, l’arte del tradurre resta pur sempre consanguinea a quello dello scrivere in proprio, e giudicare una traduzione letterariamente rilevante, cioè fondata su un autentico progetto espressivo, richiede un gesto critico che trascende la semplice competenza linguistica.⁵²⁷

However, as a critic and a poet, he was very familiar with the technical processes of writing and analysis. There are many self-commentaries, notes and interviews

⁵²⁴ Giovanni Raboni, *La fossa di Cherubino* (Milan: Guanda, 1980).

⁵²⁵ Baudelaire quoted in Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 119.

⁵²⁶ As discussed in Chapter 1, Raboni placed himself among translators (‘mi considero un traduttore, non un traduttologo’). See Dolfi, ‘Giovanni Raboni (ovvero tradurre per amore)’, p. 625.

⁵²⁷ The article ‘Giudici e Puškin, un confronto in versi’ (6 June 1999) in Giovanni Raboni, *Il libro del giorno 1998-2003*, p. 117.

where Raboni explains his approach to translation and his translation techniques when working on his numerous translations.

Raboni's positive review of Giudici's translation of *Eugene Onegin* accepts that Giudici blurs the boundary between the translation act and that of composing proper poetry. This relative freedom and creative approach to translation popular in the first half of the twentieth century (Montale, for example)⁵²⁸ stands in sharp contrast to Raboni's own translation methods.

Raboni was concerned that he should not be accused of a translator's egoism and self-satisfaction, in translating for translating's sake, which would result in imprinting his own style rather than adopting what he saw as the compulsory condition of abnegation⁵²⁹ in order to respect all the contradictions and transformations of the translated text. To Raboni, translators who are not able to abnegate betray themselves first of all. The unique creative work of the author, at that moment in time and in that context, has to be transparent.⁵³⁰ For example, while translating Proust, Raboni followed a rule, stated by himself as absolute and unbreakable: not to put a full stop where there was none in the original, to respect and reflect the syntax and the space built by Proust.⁵³¹ As stated in Chapter 1, Benjamin used the same approach as Raboni in rendering syntax.

⁵²⁸ 'The poet-in-the-translator is able to absorb the voltage of another language, charging and liberating his own language with its poetic energy, and marking it with the unmistakable sign of the author. This is the miracle that transforms the translation into a new original, and the debt into a gift. All Montale's translations bear inspired and convincing witness of this miracle'. See Marco Sonzogni, 'Arsenio's Alchemy: Notes on Eugenio Montale's 1933 Translations of T.S. Eliot and Léonie Adams', in *Twentieth-Century Poetic Translation: Literary Cultures in Italian and English*, by Daniela Caselli and Daniela La Penna (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 115–26 (p. 126).

⁵²⁹ The term *annientarsi* might be better translated in this context with the verb 'abnegate' in sense of self-denying proper identity as a writer or poet, the attempt to be as transparent as it is possible.

⁵³⁰ Raboni: 'Lo scrittore che traduce deve sentirsi autore solo della propria subordinazione, del proprio *annientamento*: chi, in modo premeditato o colposo, appone il proprio marchio d'autore al testo della traduzione, tradisce, prima che l'autore tradotto, se stesso in quanto autore dell'unica opera creativa che, in quel momento e in quell'ambito, gli compete, cioè, appunto, l'opera (il testo) del proprio *annientamento* [my emphasis]'. Giovanni Raboni, 'Tradurre Proust: dalla lettura alla scrittura'. See *Proust oggi*, ed. by Luciano De Maria (Milan: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 1990), p. 114.

⁵³¹ 'Mi sono imposto come regola assolutamente non trasgredibile quella di non mettere mai un punto fermo dove Proust non l'abbia messo e, in generale, di non cedere mai alla tentazione di proiettare e svolgere sulla superficie ciò che Proust ha costruito e condensato dello spazio'. Giovanni Raboni, 'Tradurre Proust: dalla lettura alla scrittura', p. 119.

Even though syntax is different in every language and cannot be copied as a ‘mirror’ in translation. For the source text of Proust, it is a specific feature proper to the text and to the author’s style.⁵³² In such cases the translator usually has to choose whether to keep the original specific syntax of the source text or adapt it to the target audience and lose an important component of the text. Raboni created a matrix for his translations, several rules that he followed and accepted also some losses (‘infedeltà programmate’).⁵³³ For example, another translator of Baudelaire into Italian, Antonio Prete, describes how he coped with the rendering of the French *alexandrine* and explains why in the end he chose Italian ‘doppio settenario’.⁵³⁴

The object of the translation is not the text itself, but our relationship with the text.⁵³⁵ ‘Tradurre è, alla lettera, questo: far passare un insieme di significati da una lingua a un’altra, da un’epoca a un’altra, da un sistema a un altro sistema di segni e di riferimenti’.⁵³⁶ Poetry translation is even more demanding of the translator,⁵³⁷ as in addition to lexis and syntax choices, there are rhyme, rhythm and metrics constraints.

As Nicola Gardini points out:

Questa è la *difficoltà* massima della scrittura poetica e, quindi, della traduzione poetica: che la produzione e l’espressione del significato non si limitano alla semantica delle singole parole (la *denotazione*), ma passano anche per altri livelli – suggestioni, impressioni, aure imprevedibili. In poesia, la connotazione partecipa in massimo grado al

⁵³² As well as Gadda’s syntax, for example.

⁵³³ Dolfi, ‘Giovanni Raboni (ovvero tradurre per amore)’, p. 627.

⁵³⁴ Antonio Prete, ‘In compagnia di Baudelaire traduzione, dialogo, imitazione’, *Cahiers d’études romanes* (2011), 31–43 (p. 33).

⁵³⁵ Raboni: ‘Il vero oggetto di una traduzione non è il testo originale, ma il nostro rapporto con esso, voglio dire il rapporto che si instaura fra tutto ciò che agisce dentro e attraverso la nostra persona e tutto ciò che ha agito dentro e attraverso la persona dell’autore’. Giovanni Raboni, ‘Nota del traduttore’, in *La scuola delle mogli*, by Molière, Programma di sala (Milan: Compagnia del Teatro Calcano, 2003).

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ ‘The problem of helping the reader with broader contextual material is particularly acute in poetry translation, because the kinds of devices used by translators of prose or play-texts, which range from glossaries to additional explanatory sentences or omissions of problematic points, may be unsuited to the formal constraints posed by a poem’ in Susan Bassnett, *Translation* (London: Routledge, 2013) p.110; see also Francis R. Jones, *Poetry Translating as Expert Action: Processes, Priorities and Networks* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2011); Willis Barnstone, ‘An ABC of Translating Poetry’, in *The Poetics of Translation: History, Theory, Practice*, by Willis Barnstone (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 265–271; Umberto Eco, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa: esperienze di traduzione*, 2003; Susan Bassnett, ‘Poetry and Translation’, in *Translation Studies*, 4th edn. (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), pp.92–119.

processo della significazione – una significazione che spesso non è riducibile a un senso razionale o razionalizzabile.⁵³⁸

Apart from the difficulties of the source text that the poetry translator encounters, Nicola Gardini seems to merge the activities of writing poetry and translating it, referring also to the tradition of ‘quaderno di traduzioni’ in Italy: ‘E, non a caso, numerosi poeti, sia italiani sia stranieri, fanno della traduzione poetica una parte fondamentale della loro scrittura’.⁵³⁹ In fact, for poets who translate poetry, the processes of translation and those of composing are often almost identical. For example, Anna Dolfi writes about Caproni, another translator of *Les Fleurs du mal*, that for him ‘there was no difference between writing and translating’.⁵⁴⁰ In this regard Raboni wrote a laudable article on *Corriere della sera* about Giudici’s rendering of *Eugene Onegin* by Pushkin. It is noticeable also that in this short passage Raboni twice stresses the importance of the prosody:

Lascio in sospenso la questione, che potrebbe anche rimanere insoluta per mancanza di comunicazione fra i due opposti partiti, per dire o meglio ribadire quale sia la mia personale convinzione di fronte a un’impresa di stupefacente novità e compatezza stilistica, che attraverso *un’ardita mimesi fonosillabica della tetrapodia giambica* dell’originale acquisisce alla nostra tradizione o oserei dire al nostro orecchio un tipo metrico sostanzialmente inaudito e che, fedele o magnifica infedele che sia, consente comunque a un lettore ignaro della lingua russa di seguire le vicende candidamente inebrianti e tormentose della narrazione puškiniana senza dover rinunciare *ai confronti di una vera musica*. Meglio immaginarlo ‘da zero’, cioè su dei similversi o su una prosa puramente riferenziale, lo specifico forse davvero irripetibile incanto dei versi di Puškin, o meglio immaginarlo a partire dai versi italiani, in sé bellissimi, di un poeta come Giudici, nella cui opera complessiva quest’opera di riscrittura o reinvenzione si inserisce a pieno titolo? La mia risposta è implicita, credo, nella domanda, e vale come raccomandazione a procurarsi, che ancora non l’avesse provato, il piacere e magari anche, perché no? il brivido, il rischio di questo incontro impossibile [my emphasis].⁵⁴¹

However, some poet-translators tend to consider their translations as their own poems,⁵⁴² or perceive the result of poetic translation as a fusion of two voices.⁵⁴³

⁵³⁸ Gardini, *Com’è fatta una poesia?*, p. 157.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., p. 158.

⁵⁴⁰ Anna Dolfi, ‘Translation and the European Tradition: The Italian ‘Third Generation’’, in *Twentieth-Century Poetic Translation: Literary Cultures in Italian and English*, by Daniela Caselli and Daniela La Penna (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 45–54 (p. 53).

⁵⁴¹ The article about Giudici’s translation was published in *Corriere della Sera* on 6 June 1999, is available in the collection of Raboni’s essays. See ‘Giudici e Puškin, un confronto in versi’ in Giovanni Raboni, *Il libro del giorno 1998-2003*, pp. 117–118.

⁵⁴² ‘I know that I feel equally possessive about all the poems I have translated: because of the process I have described they have become *mine*’. See Joseph P. Clancy, *Other Words: Essays on Poetry and Translation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), p. 15.

⁵⁴³ ‘For Caproni, translation is a mark of a relationship which, while based on mutual recognition and reciprocal expropriation (of one’s own and the other’s voice), does not open up the possibility of total identity between the two voices.’ See Enrico Tesla, ‘Translating Larkin’, in

They also admit that they discover new elements of poetic production that they would never be able to achieve without their experience as translators. For example, Nicola Gardini writes:

Grazie alla traduzione una lingua crea quello che non potrebbe creare neppure per mezzo del più inventivo dei suoi geni. I frutti della traduzione sono unici. Potranno allappare, ma non vanno messi nelle sporte delle cose immangiabili. Un sapore nuovo non è una perdita per la bocca, ma un guadagno. Il nutrimento può essere momentaneo, o dare effetti tardivi. In ogni caso, meglio nutrirsi di poco che di niente. Senza traduzioni non si cresce.⁵⁴⁴

Raboni himself considered the process of translating poetry essential to improve the writing skills of the poet: ‘se si vuol fare la poesia, il tradurre poesia è l’unica vera scuola’.⁵⁴⁵ In fact, translation can be a key to all other activities of writers.⁵⁴⁶

Discussing poetry in Italian and in dialects, Raboni explains what a poetic translation means to him: ‘una traduzione vera, una traduzione letteraria, capace di suggerire (non dico di riprodurre) la struttura metrica e la specificità figurale’.⁵⁴⁷ According to Raboni, the result of a poetic translation would be not of a translated poem but a different poem.⁵⁴⁸ He maintained that translating poetry is impossible, though someone still has to attempt it. According to Raboni both texts, the original and the translation, benefit⁵⁴⁹ as they are two realities, which look into each other and need each other (‘due realtà che si affacciano l’una sull’altra e che hanno bisogno l’una dell’altra’).⁵⁵⁰

Twentieth-Century Poetic Translation: Literary Cultures in Italian and English, by Daniela Caselli and Daniela La Penna (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 144.

⁵⁴⁴ Gardini, *Com'è fatta una poesia?*, p. 152.

⁵⁴⁵ Matteo Collura, ‘Da Baudelaire al Tempo Perduto’, *Corriere della sera*, 20 January 2002, p. 31.

⁵⁴⁶ ‘Stan Smith, with more conviction than other critics, has written that during the years of the Modernist movement, translation was not so much ‘one of several activities for writers as ‘a key to all their activities’. Smith quoted in Sonzogni, p. 118.

⁵⁴⁷ ‘Come suona Carlo Porta in italiano?’ in Giovanni Raboni, *Contraddetti*, p. 34.

⁵⁴⁸ Giovanni Raboni: ‘Una poesia o non si traduce affatto o si traduce con un’altra poesia’. See Jean-Charles Vegliante, ‘Scrivere, tradurre. Un dialogo fra Giovanni Raboni e Jean-Charles Vegliante’, in *Nel lutto della luce. Poesie 1982-1997*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Turin: Einaudi, 2004), p. 172.

⁵⁴⁹ ‘[È] anche vero che per inserirsi fruttuosamente in un altro contesto linguistico la voce di un poeta ha bisogno di essere ripronunciata – ha bisogno della mediazione “corporea” di altri poeti’. Raboni in Charles Baudelaire, *I fiori del male*, trans. by Attilio Bertolucci (Milan: Garzanti, 1975), pp. xxi–xxii.

⁵⁵⁰ Vegliante, p. 178.

Time and place, ‘variable’ elements for the translation, in comparison to the ‘fixed’ nature of the source text⁵⁵¹ together with Raboni’s tendency of revisiting, lead to his numerous attempts and constant revision of his translations of *Les Fleurs du mal*:

La traduzione è per sua natura infinita, ogni volta t’accorgi che potevi far meglio. Un poeta negli anni non diventa necessariamente più bravo; invece uno scrittore di versi diventa sempre più cosciente dei mezzi linguistici: e la mia idea è che una poesia si può tradurre con un’altra poesia che assomigli alla prima e che nello stesso tempo sia un’altra cosa, una specie di ectoplasma.⁵⁵²

These re-translations lead us to five distinct editions of *I fiori del male*. Revision was necessary to Raboni. He published several editions of Apollinaire’s *Bestiario o Il Corteggio d’Orfeo*,⁵⁵³ two translations for the theatre of Racine’s *Fedra*,⁵⁵⁴ and so on. Even with regards to his own lyrics, as stated earlier, Raboni published an auto-anthology *A tanto caro sangue* in 1987, which includes revised versions of his previous compilation of verses written during 35 years (1953-1987).⁵⁵⁵

As my focus is on Raboni’s lyric and not prose, I want to analyse his major poetic translation, *I fiori del male*, particularly because it will shape better the concept of the city in Raboni’s writings. Raboni tried to update his translation, started in the 1970s, throughout his life, and therefore, considered his work on *I fiori del male* as ‘compito infinito’.⁵⁵⁶ Even after the last edition, in 1999, he was not sure that it would be the final version. In fact the question mark in the following quotation is evidence that he was thinking of a new revision: ‘solo

⁵⁵¹ ‘[T]he great difference between a text and a metatext is that the one is *fixed* in time and place, the other is *variable*’. See Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 4th edn. (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), p.111.

⁵⁵² Claudio Altarocca, ‘Raboni, la mia vita con Baudelaire’, *La Stampa*, 14 February 1999, p. 18.

⁵⁵³ Guillaume Apollinaire, *Bestiario, o il corteggio d’Orfeo*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Milan: Guanda, 1977); Guillaume Apollinaire, *Bestiario, o Il corteggio d’Orfeo*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Milan: TEA, 1996).

⁵⁵⁴ Jean Racine, *Fedra*, ed. by Riccardo Held, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Milan: Rizzoli, 1984); Jean Racine, *Fedra*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Genoa: Marietti, 1999).

⁵⁵⁵ Giovanni Raboni, *A tanto caro sangue: poesie 1953-1987* (Milan: Mondadori, 1988).

⁵⁵⁶ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Prefazione’ in *I fiori del male e altre poesie*, by Charles Baudelaire, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Turin: Einaudi, 1999), p. viii.

perché non ne ho il tempo non ho (ancora?) messo mano a un ennesimo rifacimento'.⁵⁵⁷

Les Fleurs du mal challenged many translators. Caproni decided to translate in prose, except for some poems, because 'come tutti i poeti veri, il Baudelaire è pressoché intraducibile'.⁵⁵⁸ His first translation of *Les Fleurs du mal* was published in 1962, but Caproni was not satisfied with his effort at translation⁵⁵⁹ and subsequently disowned it. He continued revising his translation until his death. Another case is Antonio Prete whose long-term relationship with Baudelaire began when he wrote a critical article about him, then continued with his translation of separate 'flowers' (different singular poems) and finally ended with his complete translated collection.⁵⁶⁰

Raboni also started to work on Baudelaire even earlier while preparing the edition of Baudelaire's diaries, published in 1970.⁵⁶¹ The first translation of *Les Fleurs du mal* took Raboni seven years, from summer 1966 to spring 1973.⁵⁶² In notes to the first edition he highlights that while translating he followed the order of the poems in the book and tried gradually to get closer to the original text and to abandon attempts to decrease expressiveness. One aspect of this 'programmed faithfulness'⁵⁶³ (as opposed to the aforementioned Raboni's 'infedeltà programmate')⁵⁶⁴ was to follow the number of the lines in Baudelaire's poems.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁵⁷ Dolfi, 'Giovanni Raboni (ovvero tradurre per amore)', p. 626.

⁵⁵⁸ See Caproni in Charles Baudelaire, *I fiori del male* (Rome: Curcio, 1962), p.12.

⁵⁵⁹ Andrea Afribo, 'Caproni traduttore dei "Fiori del male"', *Studi linguistici italiani*, 35.2 (2009), 207–24.

⁵⁶⁰ Prete explains how he started to translate Baudelaire in the aforementioned article 'In compagnia di Baudelaire : traduzione, dialogo, imitazione'. Prete's complete edition of Baudelaire was published in 2003. See Charles Baudelaire, *I fiori del male*, trans. by Antonio Prete (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2003).

⁵⁶¹ Charles Baudelaire, *Diari intimi*, ed. by Giovanni Raboni, trans. by Lucia Zatto (Milano: Mondadori, 1970).

⁵⁶² Charles Baudelaire, *Poesie e prose*, ed. by Giovanni Raboni (Milan: Mondadori, 1973).

⁵⁶³ Blakesley, pp. 117–120.

⁵⁶⁴ Dolfi, 'Giovanni Raboni (ovvero tradurre per amore)', p. 627.

⁵⁶⁵ 'La più sensibile evoluzione interna nei modi di resa dell'originale consiste probabilmente in un graduale abbandono del tentativo di de-tonalizzazione espressionistica, evidente nelle prove iniziali, e nel complementare, progressivo avvicinamento a una sorta di fedeltà letterale: percorso che risulta, tuttavia, leggibile solo in parte, dato che il lavoro di traduzione ha seguito prevalentemente, ma non rigorosamente l'ordine d'apparizione delle singole poesie nella raccolta. In nessun caso ci si è discostati dal criterio (quasi un impegno morale) di far corrispondere in ogni componimento il numero dei versi della traduzione a quello dell'originale; mentre per quanto riguarda la struttura metrica e sintattica e la consistenza lessicale, la dipendenza dal testo ha per lo più natura ricostruttiva, è cioè, più che altro, una metafora della

The second edition of *I fiori del male* was published in 1987 by Einaudi, fourteen years after the first edition.⁵⁶⁶ Apart from adding some new translations, Raboni extensively revised poems already translated from the first edition. In 1998 having already published five editions of *I fiori del male*, Raboni wrote that, in fact, the major changes were between the first and the second editions.⁵⁶⁷ There were other editions in 1992 (Einaudi), in 1996 (Mondadori), and in 1999 (Einaudi).⁵⁶⁸

There are about thirty different translations of *Les Fleurs du mal* into Italian, which is surprisingly few compared with the translations of post-Baudelaire French poets, such as Rimbaud and Mallarmé.⁵⁶⁹ Some of the translations are in prose, some in verse. Raboni pointed out in his interviews that no major Italian poets chose to translate Baudelaire. According to Raboni, Baudelaire was left in the shadows of the Italian context owing to the cultural delay of Italian poetry in the last hundred years. The pre-Baudelaire period was followed immediately by the post-Baudelaire period, without actually having had a Baudelaire period. First Baudelaire was too modern for the Italian context and it was impossible to understand his ambiguity and his alliance with the sublime and the ridiculous. Afterwards it just was too late, since new post World War II models were more oriented towards Rimbaud and Mallarmé. As a result, Baudelaire was not included or fully understood in the Italian context and the history of Italian literature lacks the actual period of ‘effettiva, effettivamente vissuta contemporaneità’ of Baudelaire.⁵⁷⁰

To put it in Franco Fortini’s words, in order to explain Baudelaire’s modernity:

dipendenza...’ (Giovanni Raboni, ‘L’arte della dissonanza’, in Baudelaire, Charles, *Opere*, ed. by Giovanni Raboni and Montesano Giuseppe (Milan: Mondadori, 1996), pp. xxxix–xlix (p. xlv).⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁶ Charles Baudelaire, *I fiori del male e altre poesie*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Turin: Einaudi, 1987).

⁵⁶⁷ Charles Baudelaire, *Diari intimi*, ed. by Giovanni Raboni, trans. by Lucia Zatto (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1970).

⁵⁶⁸ Charles Baudelaire, *I fiori del male e altre poesie*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Turin: Einaudi, 1992); Baudelaire, *Opere*, ed. by Giovanni Raboni and Giuseppe Montesano, I Meridiani (Milan: Mondadori, 1996); Baudelaire, *I fiori del male: e altre poesie*, trans. by Giovanni Raboni (Turin: Einaudi, 1999).

⁵⁶⁹ Leonardo Manigrasso, ‘Capitoli autobiografici. Poeti traduttori a confronto tra terza e quarta generazione’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Università degli studi di Padova, 2009).

⁵⁷⁰ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Prefazione’, p. viii.

Almeno per cinquant'anni, fra il decennio 1860-1870 e quello 1910-20, i contenuti primari più immediati della poesia di Baudelaire avevano da noi subite moltissime riprese, imitazioni, calchi, traduzioni, echi (dagli Scapigliati a Lucini e da Bettini a Sbarbaro): una influenza dovuta ad un equivoco interpretativo rispecchiato quasi sempre in un equivoco linguistico, l'area dei nostri simbolisti e decadenti non avendo né gli obbiettivi né le ragioni della società francese ed europea di quel tempo. Solo fra il 1910 e il 1920 si vennero a determinare le condizioni che avrebbero potuto permettere di scorgere il secondo volto di Baudelaire: l'immagine, ad esempio, della città come teatro e simbolo del mondo e del destino, dell'eros e della morte penetra i poeti nostri maggiori di quegli anni, massime Rebora. Ma in quel periodo i modelli già erano altri: quelli dei francesi venuti dopo Baudelaire. Non è un caso che la sua fortuna sia stata così bassa tanto presso le prime avanguardie quanto presso i surrealisti; e fino a oggi. Ma, appunto, egli è il poeta di un universo borghese ancora non compiutamente capitalistico.⁵⁷¹

In the post-war period (1950s) some translations of Baudelaire began to emerge, although only sporadically. For example, among the hermetic poets who translated extensively, Luzi translated only two poems (*La bellezza* in 1946, and *La vita anteriore* in 1947), and Parronchi translated only eight lyrics (published in 1957 in *Letteratura*). The translation of the whole compilation *I fiori del male* was only completed in 1967 by Caproni, and then in 1975 by Bertolucci (after Raboni's first edition, in 1973).

Caproni's admiration of Baudelaire led to a translation containing many archaic terms, thus putting prose onto a higher literary register. 'Yet Caproni's prose, heavy with rhetorical effects like inversions and hyperbatons, clearly lies at a distance from Baudelaire's own prose poems in the *Spleen de Paris* (Paris spleen)'.⁵⁷²

Indeed, Raboni tried to reflect one of the main features of Baudelaire's lyrics, namely, in the words of Albert Thibaudet, the alliance 'tra prosa nuda e poesia pura'. Raboni wrote about Baudelaire's *modernità* and mentioned T.S. Eliot, Paul Valéry, Michel Butor and their concepts of Baudelaire and his modernity. However, he admitted that he looked at Baudelaire's lyrics through the prism of two other critics and their ideas, Albert Thibaudet and Erich Auerbach.⁵⁷³ From the former he took the title of his essay *L'arte della dissonanza*, which gives the foundation for Raboni's reading of Baudelaire.⁵⁷⁴ In all five editions of *I fiori del*

⁵⁷¹ Franco Fortini, 'Una traduzione da Baudelaire', in Franco Fortini, *Nuovi saggi italiani* (Milan: Garzanti, 1987), p. 379.

⁵⁷² Blakesley, p. 116.

⁵⁷³ Albert Thibaudet, *Storia della letteratura francese dal 1789 ai nostri giorni*, cit.; Erich Auerbach, *Da Montaigne a Proust: ricerche sulla storia della cultura francese* (Bari: De Donato, 1970).

⁵⁷⁴ Giovanni Raboni, 'L'arte della dissonanza', cit., p. xlii.

male Raboni aims to perfect this principle, trying to tie free verse and traditional verse closer together. Maurizio Cucchi, in reviewing the second edition of *I fiori del male* (1987) highlights the result of this fourteen-year period of revision, stating it to be closer to the original verses of Baudelaire:

La nuova traduzione, dunque, diminuisce o cancella i segnali del divario tra poesia e prosa, tra sublime e comico, e appare meno mossa, più limpidamente composta. Ed è quindi più obiettivamente vicina all'originale, alla formidabile capacità che Baudelaire ha avuto di trattare oggetti, soggetti, materiali bassi, senza, per così dire, farli sporgere dalla pagina; bensì amalgomandoli esemplarmente, prodigiosamente, nella tenue e nell'andatura nobile dell'organismo-testo.⁵⁷⁵

The principle of binding together prose and verse reflects back to Raboni's own lyrics.⁵⁷⁶ To quote M. Cucchi again: 'Uno dei grandi meriti di Giovanni Raboni è stato quello di restituire piena plausibilità alla parola poetica, di attenuare, fino a renderlo quasi invisibile, il confine tra parlato e scritto'.⁵⁷⁷ (There are several

⁵⁷⁵ Maurizio Cucchi, 'Comico/sublime', *L'Unità*, 9 April 1987, p. 12.

⁵⁷⁶ Mengaldo points out the common feature, in the poets of the second half of the twentieth century, of mixing these two registers (high lyrical with colloquial prosaic). However, each poet sharpens his/her poetic discourse differently in order to obtain the same effect: 'Tornando alla questione della poesia che vuol essere anche prosa, il punto non è tanto, dunque, mostrare come nella lingua poetica contemporanea si tende a un generale abbassamento di tono e si ha un processo di sliricizzazione, che sarebbe inchiesta dai risultati abbastanza ovvii benché sempre significativi; quanto verificare i modi con cui i poeti più provvisti di senso formale risolvono il problema tecnico capitale di costruire un discorso poetico, lirico, con materiali non più aulici, sliricati o addirittura banali e corrvivi. Se le soluzioni sono naturalmente diverse da poeta a poeta, il compito è per tutti simile'. See Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo *La tradizione del Novecento* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1996), p.153. Raboni also often mentions this trend, for example: 'Effettivamente, è successo questo nella poesia italiana a partire dal dopoguerra, in un momento in cui la poesia si era attestata su posizioni di resistenza alla realtà. È seguita un'apertura verso il reale, e dunque verso il parlato e verso la colloquialità, verso il nominare il maggior numero possibile di oggetti. Questo si può vedere nella poesia di Luzi, nella poesia di Sereni, soprattutto a partire dagli anni Cinquanta, Sessanta, e si vede anche nei poeti più giovani. La questione dei confini tra prosa e poesia è un po' un'altra, si può scrivere una poesia che sia molto caratteristicamente poesia anche usando la lingua di tutti i giorni, dando l'importanza che nella poesia ha sempre avuto il metro, il ritmo. Io personalmente, fino a un certo momento ho teso a una prosasticizzazione anche dal punto di vista ritmico, poi mi è parso di sentire il bisogno, e pare che questo bisogno non sia solo personale, di un recupero di una forma più precisa. Ma questo non influisce sulla lingua, anzi, oserei dire un po' il contrario, quanto più m'interessa restituire una struttura alla poesia, attraverso il recupero di forme della tradizione come il sonetto e così via, tanto più sento il bisogno invece di usare una lingua che sia molto vicina alla lingua della comunicazione. Sono due problemi completamente diversi. Ha ragione Luzi quando dice che i confini della lingua della prosa e della lingua della poesia si sono venuti attenuando, quasi cancellando: rimane uno statuto ritmico, metrico, che è proprio della poesia e che la prosa non ha'. See Mario Luzi, Valerio Magrelli, and Giovanni Raboni, 'Poetando in italiano' in *Madre lingua. Percorsi di versi e di parole* (Milan: Fondazione Corriere della Sera, 2003), pp. 51-76 (p.62).

⁵⁷⁷ Maurizio Cucchi, 'Raboni: la nudità poetica di un vangelo apocrifo', *La Stampa*, 2 December 2000, p. 3.

studies about the relationship between Raboni's lyrics and prose⁵⁷⁸ including some pieces written by Raboni himself).⁵⁷⁹

From the other critic-philologist, Erich Auerbach, Raboni inherits the idea that Baudelaire was the first to give a sublime form to objects, which were traditionally considered to be grotesque, ridiculous, bizarre, low.

Raboni highlights his main credo and the influence of these two critics while translating *I fiori del male* : 'È stato dunque sotto il doppio segno dell'alleanza tra prosa e poesia (ovvero dell'arte della dissonanza) e dell'assunzione del comico nel sublime che ho cercato di porre, sin dall'inizio, il mio lavoro di ricostruzione in lingua italiana del testo poetico baudelairiano'.⁵⁸⁰

4.2 Analysis of 'La fontana di sangue' and 'Il cigno'

Having established Raboni's main techniques when translating and re-translating Baudelaire, it is interesting to perform a close reading of the results of his multiple attempts. Therefore, I will take into consideration and try to compare different versions of his renderings between the years 1973 to 1999. As previously mentioned, Raboni himself did not want us to refer solely to one or other versions of the translations, but rather to the total complex image – a fact that also explains the rationale to look at different versions:

E se non fosse, nei confronti del lettore, una pretesa evidentemente fuori luogo, mi piacerebbe che non a questa o a quella delle mie versioni quanto piuttosto al loro insieme, all'immagine complessiva e dinamica che diacronicamente ne risulta, si guardasse come alla mia proposta di lettura-traduzione delle *Fleurs du Mal* e delle altre poesie di Baudelaire.⁵⁸¹

To illustrate how all these translation techniques are reflected in Raboni's translations of *Les Fleurs du mal*, I have chosen to analyse two of Raboni's

⁵⁷⁸ Di Franza, 'Prosa e poesia in Giovanni Raboni. Il fascino discreto di una naturalezza straniata'.

⁵⁷⁹ 'Nel tradurre opere di narrative ho sempre avuto un particolare interesse e trasporto per i dialoghi. Sono affascinato dalle scene colloquiali, forse perché, anche nel mio lavoro poetico, gli stimoli e le suggestioni più forti mi vengono dal linguaggio parlato'. See Raboni in Giuseppe Saltini, 'Il fascino dei dialoghi', *Il Messaggero*, 17 January 1984, p. 3.

⁵⁸⁰ Giovanni Raboni, 'Prefazione', p. vi.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., p. viii.

translations: ‘La fontaine de sang’ (CXIII) and ‘Le cygne’ (LXXXIX). There already exist some comparative analyses of Baudelaire translations, for example by Pietro Benzoni,⁵⁸² Jacob Blakesley⁵⁸³ and Leonardo Manigrasso.⁵⁸⁴ The first two scholars compared Caproni’s and Raboni’s translations of ‘Le voyage’, while the latter traced variants of translation of the poem ‘La vie antérieure’ by Mario Luzi, Alessandro Parronchi, Vittorio Pagano and two versions completed by Raboni, the first one and the last one.

Although there are some studies of Raboni’s translation, there is no current literature providing analysis of the poems from all five editions. Raboni admitted that the major changes in his translation were done between the first and the second edition. Moreover, in a copy of the second edition available in Raboni’s archive, one can see Raboni’s multiple notes foretelling the third edition. Unlike Caproni, Raboni never denied his previous translations of *Les Fleurs du mal*. On the contrary Raboni, as a translator and as a poet, seems rather to demand more of his reader, expecting a classical philological approach. Yet, he also tries to guide the reader with multiple instructions in his prefaces, comments in translated work or in the quotations in his own lyrics, thus giving some hints to the reader.⁵⁸⁵

The sonnet ‘La fontaine de sang’ demonstrates the dynamic in Raboni’s different editions: we can trace how Raboni develops and improves translation techniques and see the evolution of the Italian context through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Secondly, the form of this specific sonnet plays a significant role, especially in Raboni’s late works, with his collections *Versi guerrieri e amorosi* (1990), *Ogni terzo pensiero* (1993), *Quare tristis* (1998). In addition, the theme of the sonnet is the city and the figure of the poet and since the focus of my research is on the cityscape in Raboni’s lyric, I have chosen to analyse his translation of poems with prominent city representation. Therefore, the second poem is from *Tableaux*

⁵⁸² Pietro Benzoni, ‘Per uno studio della metrica da Baudelaire: una panoramica e qualche appunto sul “Viaggio” di Caproni e Raboni’, *Stilistica e metrica italiana*, 9 (2010), 385–423.

⁵⁸³ Blakesley, pp. 115–120.

⁵⁸⁴ See especially ‘Quattro versioni (più una) di *La vie antérieure*. Luzi, Parronchi, Pagano e Raboni traduttori’ in Leonardo Manigrasso, *Capitoli autobiografici. Poeti che traducono poeti dagli ermetici a Luciano Erba* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2013), pp. 149–164.

⁵⁸⁵ About quotation in Raboni see Rodolfo Zucco, ‘Qualche appunto per l’edizione e il commento di “A tanto caro sangue” di Giovanni Raboni’, *Cuadernos de Filología Italiana*, 12 (2005), 103–21.

parisiens, because this section best illustrates Raboni's concept of the city.⁵⁸⁶ This poem confirms the dynamic demonstrated in the versions of the sonnet 'La fontaine de sang' and reveals the possible echoes of Baudelaire in Raboni's own lyric. In choosing a poem from *Tableaux parisiens* I also followed the suggestion of both Walter Benjamin⁵⁸⁷ and Rodolfo Zucco.⁵⁸⁸

'La fontaine de sang' was located in a different place in the first edition of *Les Fleurs du mal*, LXXXIV, where now we read 'Paysage', the poem that opens the section *Tableaux parisiens*, and this is important from the point of view of the cityscape representation – it might be considered by the author to be one of the key poems of the section about Paris. See the original text of the poem 'La fontaine de sang' and the four (plus one) versions of Raboni's translation of it in the table below (Table 15).

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <p><i>La Fontaine de Sang</i>, Charles Baudelaire</p> <p>Il me semble parfois que mon sang coule à flots, Ainsi qu'une fontaine aux rythmiques sanglots. Je l'entends bien qui coule avec un long murmure, Mais je me tâte en vain pour trouver la blessure.</p> <p>À travers la cité, comme dans un champ clos,</p> | <p>4</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|

⁵⁸⁶ 'Baudelaire nella seconda sezione di Fiori canta la città, contemplata senza pudore in tutti i suoi aspetti più sudici e ripugnanti: cloache, miasmi, rifiuti, ma anche accattonaggio, prostituzione. Lo sguardo del poeta non esita a scendere negli inferi metropolitani, traendone scene e paesaggi nuovi, mai visti prima in poesia. Nasce così una vera e propria estetica della bruttezza.' See Luigi Severi, "'I fiori del male" di Charles Baudelaire', in *Letteratura europea: il canone*, ed. by Roberto Antonelli, Gioia Paradisi, and Maria Rita Sapegno (Rome: Sapienza Università di Roma, 2012), p. 115-124 (p. 116).

⁵⁸⁷ 'It is in its transitoriness that modernity shows itself to be ultimately and most intimately akin to antiquity. The uninterrupted resonance which *Les Fleurs du mal* has found up through the present day is linked to a certain aspect of the urban scene, one that came to light only with the city's entry into poetry. It is the aspect least of all expected. What makes itself felt through the evocation of Paris in Baudelaire's verse in the infirmity and decrepitude of a great city. Nowhere, perhaps, has this been given more perfect expression than in the poem "Crépuscule du matin", which is the awakening sob of the sleeper, reproduced in the materials of urban life. This aspect, however, is more or less common to the whole cycle of "Tableaux parisiens"; it is present in the transience of the city, as conjured by "Le Soleil", no less than in the allegorical evocation of the Louvre in "Le Cygne". (J57a, 3). See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002), p. 332.

⁵⁸⁸ 'Ma l'esordio pare alludere anche ai vv.7 sgg. di *Les Fleurs du mal*, LXXXIX 'Le Cygne' [...]: identica la situazione poetica (la considerazione del mutamento del paesaggio urbano), l'allusione si appunta sulla scorciata constatazione negativa dell'attacco, e si rafforza nell'identica forma dell'elenco con cui si presentano i reperti della città scomparsa.' Zucco in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1435.

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Il s'en va, transformant les pavés en îlots, Désaltérant la soif de chaque créature, Et partout colorant en rouge la nature.</p> <p>J'ai demandé souvent à des vins captieux D'endormir pour un jour la terreur qui me mine; Le vin rend l'oeil plus clair et l'oreille plus fine!</p> <p>J'ai cherché dans l'amour un sommeil oublié; Mais l'amour n'est pour moi qu'un matelas d'aiguilles Fait pour donner à boire à ces cruelles filles!</p> | <p>8</p> <p>11</p> <p>14</p> |
| <p>La fontana di sangue (1973, Mondadori)</p> <p>È come, certe volte, se il mio sangue sgorgasse a fiotti, ritmica, singhiozzante fontana... Lo sento bene: scorre con un lungo fruscio; eppure, se cerco, non mi trovo ferite. 4</p> <p>Come un coltivo invade la città, trasforma in isole i sassi del selciato; disseta ogni creatura, tinge di rosso il mondo. 8</p> <p>Spesso al capzioso vino ho domandato di far dormire per un giorno la paura che [m'assilla; ma il vino aguzza gli occhi, fa l'orecchio più [fine... 11</p> <p>E all'amore ho chiesto il sonno dell'oblio; ma l'amore, giaciglio pieno d'aghi, non serve che a pagar da bere a quelle perfide puttane! 14</p> | <p>La fontana di sangue (1987, Einaudi)</p> <p>È come, certe volte, se il mio sangue sgorgasse a fiotti, ritmica, singhiozzante [fontana. Lo sento bene: scorre con un lungo [fruscio; eppure, se tasto, non mi trovo ferite. 4</p> <p>Invade la città come fosse un coltivo, trasforma in isolette i sassi del selciato; toglie la sete ad ogni creatura, di rosso ovunque tinge la natura. 8</p> <p>Spesso a vini capziosi ho domandato di far dormire per un giorno la paura che mi [rode; ma il vino aguzza gli occhi, fa l'orecchio più [fine! 11</p> <p>E ho chiesto all'amore il sonno dell'oblio; ma l'amore è un giaciglio pieno d'aghi, e non [serve che a pagar da bere a quelle perfide puttane! 14</p> |
| <p>La fontana di sangue (1996, Mondadori; 1992, Einaudi)</p> <p>È come, certe volte, se il mio sangue sgorgasse a fiotti, ritmica, singhiozzante [fontana. Lo sento bene: scorre con un lungo fruscio; eppure, se tasto, non mi trovo ferite. 4</p> <p>Invade la città come fosse un coltivo, trasforma in isolette i sassi del selciato; toglie la sete ad ogni creatura, tinge ovunque di rosso la natura. 8</p> <p>Spesso a vini capziosi ho domandato di far dormire per un giorno la paura che mi [rode; ma il vino aguzza gli occhi, fa l'orecchio più [fine! 11</p> | <p>La fontana di sangue (1999, Einaudi)</p> <p>È come, certe volte, se il mio sangue sgorgasse a fiotti, ritmica, singhiozzante [fontana. Lo sento bene: scorre con un lungo fruscio; eppure, se tasto, non mi trovo ferite. 4</p> <p>Invade la città come fosse un coltivo, trasforma in isolette i sassi del selciato; toglie la sete ad ogni creatura, tinge ovunque di rosso la natura. 8</p> <p>Spesso a vini capziosi ho domandato di far dormire per un giorno la paura che mi [rode; ma il vino aguzza gli occhi, fa l'orecchio più [fine! 11</p> |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E ho chiesto all'amore il sonno dell'oblio; ma l'amore è un giaciglio pieno d'aghi, e non [serve che a dissetare perfide puttane! 14 | Nell'amore ho cercato il sonno dell'oblio; ma l'amore è un giaciglio pieno d'aghi, e non [serve che a dar da bere a perfide puttane! 14 |
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Table 15. The poem 'La fontaine de sang' and the four (plus one) versions of Raboni's translation

As stated earlier, Raboni highlighted, the major corrections made while preparing the second edition. In the fourth edition the poem 'La Fontana di sangue' remains unaltered from the third edition. We can also note that, after the drastically elaborated second edition, in the editions that followed Raboni changed two lines at the end of the poem, lines 12 and 14.

The first version has greater variations in line length. In this way from the beginning Raboni saw the alliance between the sublime and colloquial (tra 'alto' e 'basso'). Therefore, in the first line the verb 'sgorgasse' is moved to the second line and remains there in all subsequent editions. Raboni tried to avoid *enjambements* and rejected breaking 'sgorgasse a fiotti'. In order to avoid a prosaic style he also changed the syntax in lines 2 and 11, thus making the verse more traditional.

In line 4 Raboni changes the prosaic, generic verb 'cercare' to more a poetic 'tastare' ('se cerco' became 'se tasto'), so changing the register. In the second stanza we can see how Raboni lengthens lines, making them more canonical. Thus, he adds 'ovunque' in line 8 (also making the translation closer to the original), he changed 'in isole' to 'in isolette', and changed short and prosaic 'disseta' to a poetic and longer expression 'toglie la seta'. Raboni wrote in his comments that he revised his translation to make the difference between poetry and prose less accentuated. In the second stanza we see how Raboni tries to blur the evident gap between two opposite registers, to make this difference more sophisticated and elaborate.

In line 9 the adjective for the wine 'capzioso' changes only its position. First it precedes the noun while later, Raboni places it after the noun. It better reflects the source text and in addition makes the phrase lighter, owing to the plural in the second version, while removing the additional consonant 'l'. Raboni was

attentive to every detail in both his translations and his poems, particularly with regard to syntax and sound:

La poesia non esiste in natura ma si costituisce sillaba per sillaba spremendo necessità dal gioco e libertà dalla costrizione, cavando una parola dall'altra e ribadendo una parola dentro l'altra sino a fare immagine di ogni suono e invenzione di ogni vincolo imposto o subito.⁵⁸⁹

In line 10, the substitution of the verb 'm'assila' to 'mi rode' can be explained by the alliteration of the sounds 'r' and 'd': 'di far dormire per un giorno la paura che mi **rode**'. In addition, 'mi rode' is more prosaic than the elegant 'm'assilla' and blurs the line between two different registers. Probably, the choice of the verb 'mi rode' (gnaw, fret) that is more physical than 'm'assilla' (torment, pester) can be related to Raboni's tendency to be more physical in his own poems.

In line 13 the metaphor for love is transformed into a sentence with two coordinate verbs in order to make it longer: 'ma l'amore, giaciglio pieno d'aghi, non serve' became 'ma l'amore è un giaciglio pieno d'aghi, e non serve'.

In the last line Raboni struggled with the verb: 'pagare da bere' in the first two editions, then 'dissetare' to make the phrase shorter. Finally in the last edition, Raboni made the phrase lighter and emphasised the adjective 'perfide' by omitting 'quelle'.

Analysis of the second poem allows me to further trace the dynamic and check for similarities. In addition, 'Le cygne' illustrates both the evolution of translation transformations and the urban theme. Owing to word constraints I will analyse only the beginning of both parts, I and II, lines 1-8 and 29-36. These two extracts bring together two parts of the poem and, as a refrain, repeat the theme of the changing city. The old city, so dear to the lyrical protagonist, is disappearing and we see this strong *leitmotiv* in Raboni's own lyric.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁹ 'La gabbia eterea di Scialoja' in Giovanni Raboni, *La poesia che si fa*, p. 365.

⁵⁹⁰ 'Il paesaggio metropolitano è il leitmotiv di questa poesia: perché l'ambrosiano Raboni, il manzoniano Raboni e la sua Milano riesce sempre a ritrovarla e ad amarla anche dietro i segni dei suoi travestimenti' in Ronfani, p.20.

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| <p>Le Cygne, Charles Baudelaire</p> <p>Andromaque, je pense à vous! Ce petit fleuve, Pauvre et triste miroir où jadis resplendit L'immense majesté de vos douleurs de veuve, Ce Simois menteur qui par vos pleurs grandit, 4</p> <p>A fécondé soudain ma mémoire fertile, Comme je traversais le nouveau Carrousel. Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville Change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel);</p> <p>[...] II</p> <p>Paris change! mais rien dans ma mélancolie N'a bougé! palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs, Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des [rocs. 32</p> <p>Aussi devant ce Louvre une image m'opprime: Je pense à mon grand cygne, avec ses gestes fous, Comme les exilés, ridicule et sublime Et rongé d'un désir sans trêve! et puis à vous. 36</p> | |
| <p>Il cigno (1973, Mondadori)</p> <p>È a te che penso, Andromaca... Questo stento [fiume, misero, opaco specchio dove un tempo rifulse, immensa, la maestà del tuo dolore, questo Simoe bugiardo che ingrossa del tuo [pianto, 4</p> <p>nel traversare il nuovo Carosello, d'improvviso fecondò la mia fertile memoria. Parigi, la vecchia Parigi scompare. Più veloce del nostro cuore muta una città. 8 [...]</p> <p>II</p> <p>Parigi cambia - ma niente, nella mia malinconia, s'è spostato: palazzi, impalcature, case, vecchi sobborghi, tutto per me diventa [l'allegoria, sono più saldi di rocce i miei ricordi. 32</p> <p>Così, davanti al Louvre, m'opprime una figura: penso al mio grande cigno, ai gesti folli che faceva, esule comico e sublime che un desiderio morde senza fine; e a te, 36 [...]</p> | <p>Il cigno (1987, Einaudi)</p> <p>È a te che penso, Andromaca! Questo stento [fiume, misero, opaco specchio dove un tempo rifulse, immensa, la maestà del tuo dolore, Simoenta bugiardo che ingrossa del tuo [pianto,</p> <p>nel traversare il nuovo Carosello, [d'improvviso fecondò la mia fertile memoria. Parigi, la vecchia Parigi scompare (una città muta di forma , ahimè!, più veloce d'un [cuore); [...]</p> <p>II</p> <p>Parigi cambia! ma niente, nella mia [malinconia, s'è spostato: palazzi rifatti, impalcature, case, vecchi sobborghi, tutto per me diventa [l'allegoria; pesano come rocce i ricordi che amo.</p> <p>Così, davanti al Louvre, m'opprime una [figura: penso al mio grande cigno, ai gesti folli che faceva, esule comico e sublime che un desiderio morde senza fine – e a te, [...]</p> |

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| <p>Il cigno (1996, Mondadori; 1992Einaudi) È a te che penso, Andromaca! Questo stento [fiume, misero, opaco specchio dove un tempo rifulse, immensa, la maestà del tuo dolore, Simoenta bugiardo gonfiato dal tuo pianto, 4</p> <p>nel traversare il nuovo Carosello, d'un tratto fecondò la mia fertile memoria. Parigi, la vecchia Parigi è sparita (più veloce d'un cuore, ahimè, cambia la forma d'una città); soltanto 8 [...]</p> <p>II Parigi cambia! ma niente, nella mia malinconia, s'è spostato: palazzi rifatti, impalcature, case, vecchi sobborghi, tutto m'è allegoria; pesano come rocce i ricordi che amo. 32</p> <p>Così, davanti al Louvre, m'opprime una figura: penso al mio grande cigno, ai gesti folli che faceva, esule comico e sublime che un desiderio morde senza fine – e a te, 36 [...]</p> | <p>Il cigno (1999, Einaudi) È a te che penso, Andromaca! Questo stento [fiume, misero, opaco specchio dove un tempo rifulse, immensa, la maestà del tuo dolore, Simoenta bugiardo gonfiato dal tuo pianto,</p> <p>nel traversare il nuovo Carosello, d'un tratto fecondò la mia fertile memoria. Parigi, la vecchia Parigi è sparita (più veloce d'un [cuore, ahimè, cambia la forma d'una città); [soltanto [...]</p> <p>II Parigi cambia! ma niente, nella mia [malinconia, s'è spostato: palazzi rifatti, impalcature, case, vecchi sobborghi, tutto m'è allegoria; pesano come rocce i ricordi che amo.</p> <p>Così, davanti al Louvre, m'opprime una [figura: penso al mio grande cigno, ai gesti folli che faceva, esule comico e sublime che un desiderio morde senza fine – e a te, [...]</p> |
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Table 16. The poem 'Le cygne' and the four (plus one) versions of Raboni's translation

From the first line we see how Raboni changes the syntax.⁵⁹¹ In line 1, and also in line 29, he splits the line with the addition of an exclamation mark. The result, in line 1, is emphasis on the proper name 'Andromaca' and, in line 29, on Baudelaire's (and similarly in Raboni's own lyric) key concept of a changing Paris. Then in line 31 Raboni again splits the phrase, adding a semicolon instead of a comma. In line 36, by contrast, he prefers to make the verse more fluid, removing the semicolon and adding a hyphen.

In lines 7-8 we see brackets that Raboni also uses in his own lyric.⁵⁹² Three sentences from the first version are merged into one sentence in the next editions.

⁵⁹¹ See the analysis of Raboni's syntax in his own work in Di Franza, 2011.

⁵⁹² For example, lines 1-4 of the poem 'Risanamento', analysed in Section 4.3: 'Di tutto questo | non c'è più niente (o forse qualcosa | s'indovina, c'è ancora qualche strada | acciottolata a mezzo, un'osteria)'; lines 7-8 of the poem '19**': 'E il tempo aiuta, | eh? non è vero? (Anche troppo.) Ma se uno [...]'; lines 1-3 from the poem 'Cinema di pomeriggio', analysed in Chapter 3: 'Quasi sempre, a quest'ora | arriva gente un po' speciale (però | di buonissimo aspetto). Chi si siede [...]'. See also Di Franza, 2011.

The use of brackets here allows Raboni to make the phrase longer, as in the source text.

Apart from syntax there are other major modifications relating to choice of lexis and inversions. For example, Raboni places the proper name of the river Simoeis, which runs through the Trojan plain, at the beginning of line 4 in the second edition, omitting 'questo' that was French 'ce' in the source text. He also changes the way he writes it, adding one syllable: 'Simoe', which transcribed from French becomes 'Simoenta' according to conventional Italian translation of this proper name. As a result, placed in this way, this proper name becomes emphasised.

The second modification in line 4 relates to the choice of the verb which is from a different register, more poetic and transformed into the past participle creating alliteration of 't' and assonance with 'o' and 'a': 'che ingrossa del tuo pianto' becomes '**gonfiato dal tuo pianto**'. The past participle and the noun even create an imperfect internal rhyme: **gonfiato – pianto**. It is interesting to note that Raboni uses the word 'gonfiato', which is associated with illness and the subject area that he tends to use in his own poetic discourse.

In lines 7-8 Raboni added a verb, which is not in the source text. Instead of Baudelaire's negative form of the verb *être*, Raboni chose two synonyms in different editions: in the first two editions it is the present tense of the verb ('**scompare**') while in the last two editions it is the past tense ('è **sparita**'). A possible explanation is the choice of phonetic equivalent, since both verbs contain the first three letters of '**Paris**' or '**Parigi**', the subject of the phrase. In addition, the negative phrase in the French source text is formed using the word 'plus', so by changing the verb, Raboni conserved the alliteration with 'p'.

In line 8, to achieve a more faithful rendering, Raboni adds the interjection 'ahimé!' that expresses regret about the changes in the city, the shame related to the vanishing of the old city so adored by the poet. Later in my analysis of Raboni's lyric 'Risanamento' we see the same thematic situation that is recurrent in his own poetic production. We see here how Raboni changes the position of the one of the key words, 'una città', placing it first at the end of the line 8, then at the end of the line 7, and in the last editions he stressed the noun 'cuore'. City

and heart are placed in the same semantic areas. As discussed in Chapter 1, Raboni wrote that even if he had lived far from the city in the countryside, he would have continued to write about the city, and more specifically about Milan. This is very similar to what Baudelaire in the piece from *Journaux Intimes* ('L'homme aime tant l'homme que quand il fuit la ville, c'est encore pour chercher la foule, c'est-à-dire pour refaire la ville à la campagne').⁵⁹³ As stated before, Baudelaire's *Diari intimi*, was edited by Raboni and was his first professional project about Baudelaire.⁵⁹⁴ We see the affiliation of two poets even before Raboni's continuous work on his poetic translation of *Les Fleurs du mal*. The ideas of both poets are similar regarding their need for the city. Yet they arrive at this from a differing perspectives: Raboni when far from a city looks for the city, writes about the city and tries to return to the city. Conversely, Baudelaire writes about different needs concerning other people, which is why he wants to create another city even inside the village.

The evolution of Raboni's translation of *I fiori del male* reflects his effort to better illustrate Baudelaire's 'bare prose and pure poetry'. In the first translation this difference between the sublime and ridiculous is more marked and prominent. In almost thirty years of intense work on Baudelaire, Raboni moved to blur the lines between high and colloquial registers, making the 'colloquial patina'⁵⁹⁵ more sophisticated.

To conclude this section I will summarise the main features of Raboni's dynamic as translator. Firstly, in 1973, using alternating line lengths Raboni tried to make Baudelaire sound more traditional,⁵⁹⁶ avoiding *enjambement* and translating into canonical hendecasyllable or double seven-syllable verses. This tendency is also

⁵⁹³ Baudelaire, Charles, *Journaux Intimes* (Paris: Librerie José Corti, 1949) p.74

⁵⁹⁴ The Italian rendering of the same passage: 'L'uomo ama talmente l'uomo che, quando fugge la città, la fugge per cercare ancora la folla: cioè, per rifare la città in campagna'. See Baudelaire, Charles, *Diari intimi*, ed. by Giovanni Raboni, trans. by Lucia Zatto (Milan: Mondadori, 1982), p. 86.

⁵⁹⁵ Blakesley, p. 119.

⁵⁹⁶ 'Lo stile e la metrica dei *Fiori del male* hanno la perfezione e l'equilibrio della grande poesia classica'. See Fausto Curi, *Piccola storia delle avanguardie da Baudelaire al Gruppo 63* (Modena: Mucchi, 2013), p. 15.

seen in general in Italian literature of the 1990s, the period when poets began to dedicate more attention to retrieving traditional poetic forms.⁵⁹⁷

Secondly, the examples illustrate how Raboni developed his translation skills, becoming transparent and making the rendering less ‘Rabonian’, sublimating his own poetic style even when dealing with a difficult source text. Raboni said that no major poet-translator from previous generations such as D’Annunzio, Campana, Rebora, Sbarbaro, Montale, Ungaretti had attempted to translate *Les Fleurs du mal*.⁵⁹⁸ Benzoni ascribes this fact to the limited interest in French translations prior to the Second World War.⁵⁹⁹ Even then, most of the translations of Baudelaire were in prose, for example, by Caproni (first edition in 1962) and by Bertolucci (1975)). Caproni also admitted that ‘il Baudelaire è pressoché intraducibile’⁶⁰⁰ and was not satisfied with his rendering. Like Raboni, he revisited his translation until his death.

The last observation regards the constant search for lexis equivalents, between prosaic and poetic, and especially at a phonetic level that we see increasing in Raboni’s renderings of Baudelaire over the years. Preserving the sound of the poem in translation requires a particular ability from the translator: ‘Ma è soprattutto [...] nell’acustica interna dell’*alexandrin* che si gioca la maestria di Baudelaire, e quindi del suo traduttore, costretto però a fare i conti con un diverso sistema fonomorfologico e una minore possibilità di sciogliere le parole nel flusso sonoro della frase’.⁶⁰¹ The translations I have analysed show how Raboni makes his rendering fluid and tries to cope with the (impossible) task of phonetic retention.

⁵⁹⁷ For example, the use of the sonnet form by poets from the second half of the twentieth century: ‘Un altro caso è quello del sonetto, forma onnipresente nella tradizione italiana, e oggetto di nuove sperimentazioni ‘critiche’ nella poesia più viva del Novecento: si vedano i casi dei numerosi sonetti di Caproni, e i sonetti di *Galateo in bosco* di Zanzotto’. See Pietro Beltrami, *La metrica italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), p. 160.

⁵⁹⁸ Raboni in Baudelaire, *I fiori del male*, p. xxii.

⁵⁹⁹ Benzoni, ‘Per uno studio della metrica da Baudelaire: una panoramica e qualche appunto sul “Viaggio” di Caproni e Raboni’, p. 391.

⁶⁰⁰ Charles Baudelaire, *I fiori del male*, trans. by Giorgio Caproni, Curcio (Rome, 1962), p. 12.

⁶⁰¹ Benzoni, ‘Per uno studio della metrica da Baudelaire: una panoramica e qualche appunto sul “Viaggio” di Caproni e Raboni’, p. 408.

4.3. Baudelaire in Raboni's poetry: 'Nella piazza? sul corso? Chi lo sa' and 'La fontaine de sang', 'Risanamento' and 'Le cygne'

Zucco, in the *Apparato critico* of the Meridiani edition, points to possible references to Baudelaire even in Raboni's early poems, such as 'Tovaglia' (1957) and 'Risanamento' (1958). Therefore, if echoes of Baudelaire already exist in Raboni's 1950s work, connections between Raboni as reader of Baudelaire and Raboni the poet, when he had not yet started his long-term relationship with *Les Fleurs du mal*, it is more likely that we should find a higher level of reference in his later production. Raboni worked tirelessly on *Fleurs du Mal*, the translation of which he started at the end of the 1960s, and continued throughout his life, in total for more than a quarter of a century. Zucco also mentions some later poems, when Raboni was already translating *Les Fleurs du mal*: 'Aurora' (1972), 'Dopo' (1972), 'Raccordo' (1975), 'Cosa' (1975?), 'Berseuse' (1979), 'Toccarti' (1981), 'Blanche fille aux cheveux roux' (1981), 'Scongiuri vespertini' (1987), 'Gli addii' (1988?) and 'Ricordo troppe cose dell'Italia' (2002).

The main protagonist of Raboni's lyric, and one of the major themes of his poetry, is the city of Milan. It is no coincidence that Cesare Garboli called Raboni's poetry '*tableaux milanesi* sprofondati "nel grave sogno" dal traduttore di Baudelaire',⁶⁰² highlighting the relationship between Raboni's poetic production and his experience as a poetic translator of Baudelaire, since one of Raboni's books is entitled *Nel grave sogno* (1965-1981). Garboli merged two of Raboni's activities, as poet and translator, coining the expression '*tableaux milanesi*', establishing a parallel with *Tableaux parisiens* from Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*. The common theme of the big city, first chosen for poetry by Baudelaire,⁶⁰³ and represented most effectively in the second section of *Les Fleurs du mal*, also connects to dream or sleep that is 'sogno' in Raboni's lyric. It is important to examine to what extent there is cross-fertilisation between

⁶⁰² Cesare Garboli, 'L'impero dei sensi', *Paragone*, 38.2 (1987), 82–90 (p. 82).

⁶⁰³ See, for example, 'The poet of Paris' in Felix William Leakey, *Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 39–42.

Raboni ‘the poet’ and Raboni ‘the translator of poetry’ and what he borrowed from *Tableaux parisiens* while describing Milan.

The second part of my analysis looks at the possible dialogue between Raboni and Baudelaire and possible references to Baudelaire in Raboni’s own poetry. According to Sanguineti ‘everything is quotation’ and ‘we live quoting’⁶⁰⁴ and quotation is one of the most frequently used techniques by Raboni.⁶⁰⁵ To demonstrate Baudelaire’s influence, I have selected and analysed two translations from Raboni’s own lyric which clearly show this interrelationship. In this section I illustrate possible echoes of Baudelaire first in Raboni’s poem ‘Nella piazza? sul corso? Chi lo sa’, which could be related to the sonnet ‘La fontaine de sang’, discussed at the beginning of the previous section, and then the poem ‘Risanamento’ which may have references to the second analysed translation ‘Le cygne’.

See below the text of Raboni’s sonnet ‘Nella piazza? sul corso? Chi lo sa’ from one of his last collections of verse (*Quare tristis*, 1998) that represents evolution both in content (perception of the city of Milan) and form (sonnet instead of free verse).

Nella piazza? sul corso? Chi lo sa,
non io di certo, io che non so nemmeno
quali esattamente sono le vene
e quali le arterie nella città

4

⁶⁰⁴ ‘La mia tesi di partenza è questa: che tutto è citazione [...] quando dico che tutto è citazione voglio dire che noi viviamo citando’. Edoardo Sanguineti, *Cultura e realtà*, ed. by Erminio Risso (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2010), p.335.

⁶⁰⁵ One of the most evident features of Raboni’s work are epigraphs – quotations that guide the reader and explain the main subject matter of the collection. Apart from the aforementioned quote from Manzoni for *Le case della Vetra*, there are some other examples. Here I want to mention the epigraph for the first section of *Le case della Vetra*. Raboni uses a quote from La Fontaine – ‘Parler de loin, ou bien se taire’ – indicating the indirect way of speaking, metaphorical narration. Raboni explains it in his interview to Biondi: ‘Non si può parlare direttamente né di sé né delle cose in sé. Bisogna trovare un modo di mettere uno schermo, di metter qualcosa davanti, qualcosa che “stia per”’. Quindi torniamo all’idea del correlative oggettivo. *Parler de loin* ha questo senso: parlare per metafora’ (quoted by Zucco in Raboni, *L’Opera poetica*, p.1428). For other epigraphs Raboni quotes other writers and poets such as Mandel’shtam, Kafka, Shakespeare but also from Mozart’s libretto *Don Giovanni*, and even from juridical documents such as Civil Code.

dove m'ostino a vivere e se viene
a travolgerci il suo sangue oppure a
infiltrarsi, a disperdersi, se va
verso i lebbrosari o verso le oscene 8

residenze dei satrapi il suo pus
incolore. Comunque non di più
che d'una fine finiranno – e intanto 11

cosa t'importa dove ferma l'omnibus
su cui siedono impettiti, uno accanto
all'altro, i moribondi in tight e gibus? 14

In 1998 Raboni looked deeply into the past and challenged the traditional form of the sonnet. Baudelaire too, inheriting a classical approach to metre and rhyme, had made a significant contribution to the transformation of the sonnet form:

Non si deve infatti dimenticare come Baudelaire rappresenti un punto nodale nella storia delle forme metriche, in particolare per due aspetti: per le variazioni sulla forma sonetto, poi sviluppate in ogni direzione nel nostro Novecento; e per l'impiego – di per sé assai parco e concentrato nei testi tardi – di alexandrins dalla cesura debole...⁶⁰⁶

In this poem Milan is represented again by a so-called and aforementioned 'death prism'⁶⁰⁷ and associated with illness as it was in Raboni's earlier lyric, especially the collection *Le case della Vetra*. However, Milan is depicted differently, as it is personified. I find the metaphor of the fountain from Baudelaire's sonnet very similar to the personified image of a bleeding Milan in the sonnet 'Nella piazza? sul corso? Chi lo sa', especially the expression 'a travolgerci il suo sangue' in line 6. The city in Raboni's sonnet is compared to a human body with its veins, arteries, blood, and pus.⁶⁰⁸

Raboni explains, how his perception of Milan changed:

Ma rispetto ai tempi de *Le case della Vetra*, cioè del libro a quale si riferiva Baldacci, penso che questo scenario si sia molto interiorizzato, che abbia perso, se così si può dire, gran parte della sua 'letteralità' e, dunque, della sua pronunciabilità immediata; e questo, credo, perché – come succede a tutti, forse, quando si invecchia – da alcuni anni tendo a guardare molto di più dentro di me e molto meno fuori di me, ossia, in altri termini, perché

⁶⁰⁶ Benzoni, 'Per uno studio della metrica da Baudelaire: una panoramica e qualche appunto sul "Viaggio" di Caproni e Raboni', p. 393.

⁶⁰⁷ 'Per non essere complice della realtà, il poeta adotta un'ottica mortuaria' Piergiorgio Bellocchio, 'L'itinerario poetico di Raboni', *Quaderni piacentini*, 14.57 (1974), p. 148.

⁶⁰⁸ Another two of Baudelaire's poems from *Tableaux parisiens*, *Les sept vieillards* and *Les petites vieilles*, speak about veins, blood and the city.

la Milano che più mi riguarda e mi emoziona la ritrovo, ormai, soprattutto nella memoria.⁶⁰⁹

So Raboni notes here that the description and observation of the urban space has transformed in his lyric towards feelings and emotions, evoked by memories of the Milan of the past.

The sonnet 'Nella piazza? sul corso? Chi lo sa' starts with the question which continues only in the tenth line: everyone will die on the square (see the parallel with the poor fed people on the square from 'La città dall'alto') or the avenue or elsewhere. The speaker in the poem likes to live in this city ('m'ostino a vivere') despite the theme of illness and death: the city itself is suffering, bleeding, and arrogant citizens, who are enjoying their lives wearing evening dress and hats, are also dying. The opposition of well-dressed people and the city where it is impossible to live, is highlighted also by opposition of 'lebbrosari' and 'residenze dei satrapi'. The syntax and the fluid structure of the sonnet are close to spoken speech. Therefore, we see an example of the combination of a sonnet form and colloquial content within it, a modern poetic discourse within traditional constraints. In part, it reflects also Raboni's work as a translator while working on Baudelaire, when he tried to bind together two extremes: sublime and everyday lexis.

Manzoni's reference to the metaphorical plague is seen also in the poem 'Risanamento'. Despite the fact that it is dated 1957 and first appears in the collection of verses *Le case della Vetra*, there is a second version of this poem in *A tanto caro sangue* (1953-1987).

| Risanamento | Risanamento |
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| <p>Di tutto questo non c'è più niente (o forse qualcosa s'indovina, c'è ancora qualche strada acciottolata a mezzo, un'osteria...) Mio padre diceva che la gente di qui, di piazza della Vetra, dietro a San Lorenzo, era gente da uscir di casa col coltello alle sette di sera. Eh sì, il Naviglio è a due passi, la nebbia era più forte prima che lo coprissero, la piazza</p> | <p>Di tutto questo non c'è più niente (o forse qualcosa s'indovina, c'è ancora qualche strada acciottolata a mezzo, un'osteria). Qui, diceva mio padre, conveniva venirci col coltello... Eh sì, il Naviglio è a due passi, la nebbia era più forte prima che lo coprissero... Ma quello che hanno fatto, distruggere le case, distruggere quartieri, qui e altrove a cosa serve? Il male non era</p> |

⁶⁰⁹ Giovanni Raboni, 'Ormai ritrovo Milano solo nella mia memoria', p. 86.

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| <p>piena di bancarelle con le luci a acetilene, le padelle nere delle castagne arrosto, i mangiatori di chiodi e di stoviglie non era certo un posto da passarci insieme a una ragazza. Ma così come hanno fatto, abbattere case, distruggere quartieri, qui e altrove (la Vetra, Fiori Chiari, il Bottonuto), a cosa serve? Il male non era in quelle scale, in certi portoncini con la spia, nei cortili soffocati dai ballatoi: lì semmai c'era umido da prendersi un malanno. Se mio padre fosse vivo, chiederei anche a lui: ti sembra che serva? è il modo? A me sembra che il male non è mai nelle cose, gli direi. (1957, from <i>Le case della Vetra</i>)</p> | <p>lì dentro, nelle scale, nei cortili nei ballatoi, lì semmai c'era umido da prendersi un malanno. Se mio padre fosse vivo, chiederei anche a lui: ti sembra che serva? è il modo? A me sembra che il [male non è mai nelle cose, gli direi. (from <i>A tanto caro sangue</i>, poems 1953- 1987)</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Table 17. Two versions of the poem 'Risanamento'

'Risanamento' from *Le case della Vetra* is longer than the second one (28 lines versus 17 lines). First, Raboni took away some topographic details (San Lorenzo, la piazza della Vetra, la Vetra, Fiori Chiari, il Bottonuto). The street Fiori Chiari was important to Raboni because he shared an office with the poet Giorgio Cesarano and then he lived there with Serena Vitale, his second wife. Il Bottonuto was a poor and dangerous area of Milan, next to the Duomo. It represented 'real life' similar to Baudelaire's poetic environment of gamblers and marginal protagonists:

La contrada del Bottonuto era fatta di popolo e di sangue. Il ventre della città, povera gente, poche regole. Ma il cuore aristocratico batteva a due passi, in piazza Duomo, e i benpensanti storcevano il naso passando per il vecchio Verziere, in quel dedalo di vicoli che collezionavano solo cantoni maleodoranti e facce da 'ligera', buone per la galera. [...]Ma un quartiere speciale: con il proletariato e la borghesia che quasi quasi si mescolano. A metà degli anni Cinquanta, il Bottonuto esisteva ancora, vivace e aperto, con le sue facce da bande e le sue sfide a pallone. Giù gli steccati sociali, si giocava in via Larga, nelle sere d'estate. Calcio di strada, salutare e democratico.⁶¹⁰

The description of an area no longer existing in Milan is very similar to the description of Paris narrated by Baudelaire and noted by Théophile Gautier, the

⁶¹⁰ Giuseppe Tesorio, 'Contrada Bottonuto Il "ventre" di Milano', *Corriere della sera*, 8 October 2010, p. 7.

poet to whom Baudelaire dedicated his book, in the preface of *Les Fleurs du mal*. In the passage below Gautier explains the thematic situation in 'Le soleil', a poem from *Tableaux parisiens*:

Un piccolo componimento che vien dopo quello, e che ha per titolo 'Sole', contiene una specie di tacita giustificazione del poeta nelle sue corse vagabonde. Un vivido raggio brilla sulla città fangosa; l'autore è uscito di casa e percorre, 'come un poeta che prende dei versi al vischio', per servirci della vecchia espressione del vecchio Mathurin Regnier, dei trivî immondi, delle viuzze nelle quali le griglie chiuse nascondono, rivelandole, lussurie secrete, tutto quel dedalo nero, umido, fangoso delle vecchie vie dalle case cieche e lebbrose, dove la luce fa brillare, qua e là, a qualche finestra un vaso di fiori o una testa di fanciulla. Il poeta non è forse come il sole, che penetra dappertutto, nell'ospedale come nel palazzo, nella stamberga come nel tempio, sempre puro, sempre splendido, sempre divino, versando, indifferente, la sua luce dorata sul carcame e sulla rosa?⁶¹¹

The two mentioned extracts create very analogous situations of dangerous, poor areas with strange, peculiar people and old houses that nevertheless, attract us. In both descriptions there is a labyrinthine maze of small streets ('dedalo di vicoli' vs 'dedalo nero'). In general, Raboni indicates precise locations, streets, dates, year, tram numbers (*Barlumi di storia*) etc.

It is curious that apart from omitted topographic details, Raboni stresses the verb 'distruggere' repeating it twice: 'Ma quello | che hanno fatto, distruggere le case, | distruggere quartieri, qui e altrove | a cosa serve?' In the poem two worlds, 'old' and 'new', are opposed, as we have seen already in other poems and writings such as 'Una volta', 'Una città dall'alto', 'In una piazza quadrata'. The 'old' world may not have been safe, because there were bandits, people preferred to carry knives and there was more fog from the water of the Naviglio, which now is covered. In the first version memories seem fresher because the author remembers squares with shops and people who used to roast and sell chestnuts. The atmosphere of the 'old' was depicted as a town festival with lights ('le luci a acetilene') and could be compared to the holidays in Baudelaire's writings such as 'Le Vieux saltimbanque'. The author is nostalgic for the 'old', imperfect reality.

Sometimes, however, Raboni accepts innovations, especially when they became part of the new urban cityscape. For example, in the article *Se Milano spegne le*

⁶¹¹ Teofilo Gautier, 'Carlo Baudelaire', in *I fiori del male*, by Carlo Baudelaire (Milan: Sonzogno, 1893), p. 54.

sue stelle Raboni quoted Saba's poem 'Milano'.⁶¹² He wrote about Piazza Duomo and its advertisement hoardings ('parole-stelle'), which were forbidden: 'Ci sono molti modi per deturpare una città o un'opera d'arte, e uno di questi consiste nel rimuovere quelle che si possono scambiare, in buona fede, per deturpazioni mentre fanno ormai parte integrante della sua immagine'. Raboni is pessimistic about the future of Piazza Duomo, which in the evening will be 'dopo il crepuscolo, uno spazio malinconicamente buio'.⁶¹³

Another important feature of Raboni's lyric is the dialogue, addressing the defunct. In the poem 'Risanamento' the departed is Raboni's father. A father figure was very important for Raboni and appears in many lyrics. Questions, however, are rhetorical and the protagonist tells us the truth, the facts rather than questioning. In the protagonist's response is another link to Baudelaire, with the key word 'male': 'A **me** sembra che il **male** | non è **mai** nelle cose, gli direi'.⁶¹⁴ The word 'male' is emphasised twice. Firstly, owing to its position: at the end of the line, almost the last line and because the last line is short, 'male' becomes even more significant. Secondly, it is stressed through the alliteration of the sound 'm' and the assonances of 'e' and 'a'. This phonetic emphasis is even stronger as '**male**' is followed by '**mai**', creating a parallelism of sounds 'ma'.

Turning back to the two versions of 'Risanamento', according to Raboni both poems are equally important and complete. This approach is the same as he used for his translation of *Les Fleurs du mal* and each of the five different editions. The definitive version of the poem does not exist; different versions support each other and serve as a passage to the next one. We see the interconnection between two of Raboni's activities, Raboni the poet and Raboni the translator.

Raboni wrote that today, in general, every poet is an interpreter, a translator of reality. This experience enriches him and helps him to discover himself:

⁶¹² Giovanni Raboni, *Contraddetti*, pp. 75–76.

⁶¹³ Raboni again uses the word 'crepuscolo', his favourite time of day that could be a link to Baudelaire. Giovanni Raboni, *Contraddetti*, p. 76.

⁶¹⁴ Maurizio Cucchi, whose reviews about different editions of *I fiori del male* translated by Raboni are also taken into consideration, uses the quotation from Raboni's 'Risanamento' for his novel *Il male è nelle cose* (2005).

Credo che un poeta di oggi non possa fare a meno di essere anche un traduttore; magari non lo sarà in pratica, ma potenzialmente lo è, perché è continuamente costretto a fare i conti con un diverso che lo scombuscola, che lo arricchisce, che lo rivela a se stesso.⁶¹⁵

Berardinelli comments that Raboni was an extraordinary translator of Baudelaire and Proust and points out that Raboni continued to translate while composing his own work in his poetic discourse.⁶¹⁶ Zucco suggests it is the other way round: that Raboni the poet influenced the process of his translation rather than Raboni the translator, his poetic writing.⁶¹⁷ Raboni admitted also the formative function of translation, which was for him a source of inspiration and experimentation.⁶¹⁸ Referring to this formative function he wrote:

Credo [la traduzione] sia il maggior laboratorio che un poeta possa frequentare. C'è il lavoro sull'espressione, sulla forma al riparo dalle turbolenze dell' 'ispirazione'. Le cose da dire sono già scritte e bisogna dirle in un certo modo. È in parte un'esecuzione, in parte una riscrittura. Il lato artigianale della scrittura viene in primissimo piano, lato artigianale che io consider fondamentale per il lavoro poetico.⁶¹⁹

It is difficult to evaluate to what extent both processes, of composing and translating poetry, are interconnected. However, their relationship is beyond doubt, especially when the poet has much in common with the translated text and works on it throughout his life. However, we can say that it was not just his translation, but also Raboni's reading of Baudelaire, which left a mark on his early poetic production as shown in my analysis of 'Risanamento', one of his earliest poems. The analysis of both renderings, 'La Fontana di sangue' and a piece from 'Il cigno', illustrates the evolution in Raboni's approach to translation congruent to the development of his own writing style.

⁶¹⁵ Vegliante, p. 177.

⁶¹⁶ 'Raboni è uno straordinario traduttore e ha tradotto Baudelaire e Proust. Ma altre sue traduzioni entrano qui e là nei suoi stessi libri. Il suo mimetismo (più mentale che linguistico) è portentoso. Si direbbe che Raboni traduca sempre anche quando parla di sé, tanto più vesta e travesta quanto più sembra denudare'. See Alfonso Berardinelli in Giovanni Raboni, *Tutte le poesie*, cit., pp.435–437, p. 436.

⁶¹⁷ See the last answer for the last question of the interview: Rodolfo Zucco, 'Giovanni Raboni's Poetry: a Conversation with Rodolfo Zucco', *ReadingItaly*, 2014, <<https://readingitaly.wordpress.com/2014/12/09/giovanni-raboni-academia/>> [accessed 21 January 2015].

⁶¹⁸ 'Forse anche perché al francese mi dedico in veste di traduttore, e questo mi permette di usare stili, registri, sonorità che come autore non mi concedo'. Intervista in una tesi di laurea di M.L.Bandi. See Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1546.

⁶¹⁹ Guido Mazzoni, 'Classicismo e sperimentazione contro la perdita di significato. Intervista a Giovanni Raboni', *Allegoria*, 9.25 (1997), 141–46.

Raboni tried to combine two opposing registers when translating Baudelaire, following the suggestion of Albert Thibaudet. Such combination of ‘a bare prose and a pure poetry’ is also reflected in the evolution of Raboni’s own poetic discourse and writings. Another interesting point is that this feature and the same approach of combining the colloquial and the sublime is imprinted also in his other translations, for example, of Sophocles. Such an approach seems strange for such disparate writers, and for different types of readings: one for the theatre, for oral presentation, and the other for individual reading. Raboni writes about his rendering of *Antigone* by Sophocles in his commentaries *Tradurre un sentimento*, published in *I quaderni del teatro Olimpico* in 2000:

Tradurre un simile capolavoro, dare a questa eterna e terribile *querelle* le parole della propria lingua e della propria personale espressività, è un’impresa talmente temeraria che la si può compiere solo in uno stato di euforica incoscienza. Ciò non toglie che io abbia cercato di assumere – prima e, per così dire, a freddo – alcune decisioni razionali. La prima riguarda il tipo di versi da usare: per le parti dialogate ho optato per il più tradizionale e naturale dei versi italiani, l’endecasillabo (ma spesso volutamente degradato e ‘insonorizzato’ da un’estrema varietà di accenti non canonici), mentre ho cercato di alludere alla compessa verticalità ritmica e retorica delle parti corali con un’alternanza di misure più brevi, ma sempre dispari (quinari, settenari, novenari), tale da suggerire l’impressione o, meglio, l’immagine di una sorta di clessidra sonora. Poi, il lessico: che non doveva essere né aprioristicamente ‘alto’ né provocatoriamente ‘basso’, che doveva conciliare solennità e quotidianità, *nonchalance* colloquiale e percussività aforistica, escludendo qualsiasi anacronismo sia in avanti che all’indietro e resistendo alle opposte tentazioni (e agli opposti rischi) dell’arcaismo e della ‘attualizzazione’.⁶²⁰

⁶²⁰ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Tradurre il sentimento’, in *Tu hai preferito vivere io morire: con Antigone di Sofocle*, ed. by Maria Grazia Ciani and Francesco Donadi, *I quaderni del Teatro Olimpico* (Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica, 2000), pp. 14–15.

Conclusion

*‘noi viviamo in una specie di città sommersa
e dei molti strati vediamo solo l’ultimo’.*
(Raboni)⁶²¹

In conclusion to this thesis, I shall summarise both the main characteristics of Raboni’s cityscape identified in my study and the findings from my analysis that shape Raboni’s image of Milan in his writings. In addition, I will trace the possible directions of my future research on Raboni.

Robert Gordon’s stated ‘foundation’ for the study of Italian literature in the last century consists of three key elements – geography, language and spaces⁶²² – and these were the starting points for my research and in part the aim of the thesis. In Italy, a country that achieved political unification late in its history compared to other countries, literature is one of the rare examples where ‘negotiation between the local and the national has taken place.’⁶²³ Thus rootedness has explicit exposure in Italian writing and combines the ‘complicated balance between local identity and literary complexity’.⁶²⁴ In my thesis, I analysed an element of ‘local identity’ through links to Italian intellectuals and exemplified the ‘literary complexity’ that represents Milan in Raboni’s poetic discourse through an analysis of his poems and translations of Baudelaire.

From Raboni’s first collection he was seen as an urban poet who inherited the Lombard tradition of Manzoni’s historicism, including the themes of metaphorical plague, illness and death that were intentional intertextual references to him. Magro speaks about *Le case della Vetra*: ‘si tratta di una città

⁶²¹ Mura, ‘La ricerca di Raboni: “Milano è emozione”’.

⁶²² Three sections of the first chapter of his book entitled exactly as listed. Robert S. C. Gordon, *An Introduction to Twentieth-Century Italian Literature: A Difficult Modernity*, New Readings: Introductions to European Literature and Culture (London: Duckworth, 2005).

⁶²³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

malata, o meglio di una città che è stata avvelenata. A partire da questo dato di fatto l'autore mette in campo una serie di voci che documentano questa malattia, ne scovano i sintomi nei luoghi, nelle cose, nelle figure umane attraversate dalle loro storie'.⁶²⁵

Referring to the same collection of verses, in 1966 Baldacci also points to the Lombard roots in Raboni's poetry mentioning the common features his poetic discourse has with his poet-mentors Vittorio Sereni and Bartolo Cattafi, as well as Franco Fortini and Giovanni Giudici: 'Poesia lombarda, dunque, anche per il contesto letterario: al quale hanno contribuito i poeti sia pure di diversa provenienza geografica: la vicenda pubblico-privata di Giudici, il nichilismo di Cattafi, e soprattutto la moralità di Fortini, la resistenza di Sereni alle situazioni e alle occasioni. E, sempre lombarda, una certa oscurità, un *trobar clus* ostinato, una verità che non si concede ma che vuol essere decifrata'.⁶²⁶

Milan's inhabitants, who, according to Certeau, create the narrative of the city with their everyday activities, are often marginal characters or just passers-by in Raboni's poetry. The protagonists like the poet-recluse from 'Appartamento', the prostitutes from 'Il catalogo è questo', the poor people on the square from 'La città dall'alto', spectators ('cacciati') from 'Cinema di pomeriggio', amongst others remind us of the citizens of Baudelaire's literary world. Another connection with Baudelaire, seen also through the prism of Benjamin, is the figure of a *flâneur* that Raboni's lyrical 'I' often represents. As a *flâneur* the poet-protagonist needs the crowd while moving through the city with the flow of passers-by, or a reader-companion (who is often included in the narration through use of verbs in the first person plural 'we'). Detailed analysis of Raboni's 'travel' writings illustrates the cityscape in motion through the *passaggiata* in Raboni's favourite district of Milan – Porta Venezia. If every modern city including Milan represents for Raboni a 'lazzaretto', then Porta Venezia and its corso Buenos Aires signifies life with its twenty-four hours vibrant activity and multi-ethnic ever-changing environment.

Raboni's perception of Milan evolves throughout his life despite being always connected to the adjective '(in)vivibile' (which is almost always in negative

⁶²⁵ Magro, *Un luogo della verità umana*, p. 64.

⁶²⁶ Baldacci, 'La realtà di Raboni è la città, è Milano', p. 383.

form). In 1960 (referring again to his first collection) he starts the poem with the lines ‘Una città come questa non è per viverci’. Thirty years later, however, Raboni reduces his level of ‘invivibilità’ writing about Porta Venezia as follows: ‘Diciamo che è fra le meno invivibili. Ha conservato la sua fisionomia edilizia, le sue case d’inizio secolo, ed è strano, a pensarci, che i bombardamenti abbiano risparmiato una zona così vicina alla stazione ferroviaria’.⁶²⁷ In the quotation above we see that Raboni always remembered his traumatic childhood experience during the war, while observing the city and its identity through the visual elements: houses, railway station, and also windows, squares, trams, streets, cinemas – those elements of the urban landscape analysed in Chapter 3. The increasing ‘vivibilità’ is crucial in Raboni’s article in *Corriere della Sera*, written a little more than one year before his death in 2003. Here Raboni finally sees the city as a place suitable in which to live. He rejoices in the calm atmosphere of Milan, where he can continue his *flânerie*, looking at the world around him, and where he feels safe when crossing the road. The machines and automatisation that dehumanised life in PPT and in Raboni’s poems, now step aside giving way to the people.

Sarà anche, forse, perché fra tante ragioni d’amarezza e d’angoscia bisogna pur inventarsi, per tirare avanti, qualche pretesto di gioia, ma sta di fatto che *Milano, in questi giorni, mi è sembrata un inaspettato prodigio di calma, di luce, di vivibilità e più ancora (si può dire?) di guardabilità*. Passeggiando su un marciapiede si poteva vedere, e forse persino riconoscere, chi passeggiava sul marciapiede opposto. Si poteva, col semaforo verde o col consenso di un vigile, passare davanti ai musì ringhianti delle automobili senza sentirsi degli abusivi, degli infiltrati, dei sopravvissuti. Percorsi e distanze avevano smesso all’improvviso di apparirci ciò che ci appaiono da anni – rischiose battaglie da vincere, rebus da decifrare, incubi diurni da esorcizzare – per ridiventare degli spazi da vivere, dei luoghi da riconoscere [my emphasis]...⁶²⁸

At the end of his life along with the reference to Manzoni (‘sopravvissuti’) Raboni finally enjoys what he sees in the city during his *flânerie*. He used to appeal to the past in his writings, and now he can find pleasure in his present surroundings. Using the critical framework of Benjamin and Certeau, we have seen that movement is important at all levels of the analysis of Raboni’s poetic discourse. On a symbolic level, movement and symbols of water such as a fountain and a river symbolise the circular nature of life, as Raboni considered

⁶²⁷ Mura, ‘La ricerca di Raboni: “Milano è emozione”’.

⁶²⁸ Giovanni Raboni, ‘Un fascino ritrovato’, p. 45.

life's journey to be endless through the 'comunione dei vivi e dei morti'.⁶²⁹ Movement featured additionally in Raboni's work as a translator, where he could be seen as a cultural mediator who helps in the circulation of literary texts in time and space.⁶³⁰ Furthermore, his constant revision, of both his own writings and translations, explains the mobility of the texts. The most important finding that comes out of the prosodic analysis of NOOC and PPT in Chapter 2 is the significance of movement in Raboni's poetic discourse related to his poetic space – the elements of the poetic text that help him to create a fluid discourse. The symbol of a river, prosody, syntax are all enclosed into formal boundaries and illustrate Raboni's 'fiumi di parole'.

Regarding the formal evolution, this fluid discourse is particularly characteristic of Raboni's mature writings in the 1990s. Looking back, in 1975 Bellocchio wrote about the evolution in Raboni's style: 'Raboni sembra [...] partire da un massimo di impersonalità, di maniera, per aprirsi non senza forti resistenze a un discorso sempre più personale'.⁶³¹ He concludes the article with the comment:

L'evoluzione di Raboni procede da una tendenza centripeta a una centrifuga, dall'isolamento alla dispersione. La frammentazione viene portata all'estremo: composizioni sempre più brevi, moltiplicazione delle sezioni, disparità di materiali e di toni all'interno dei singoli pezzi. Eppure mai Raboni aveva dato una maggiore impressione di coerenza e unità. La rete che questi frammenti compongono è sottile, tortuosa, elusiva, ma forse non è mai così resistente.⁶³²

These two features – the fragmentation within a thoughtful structure and the increasing ability to speak frankly – are further enhanced as Raboni's mastery matures. Initially Raboni is able to express his feeling by distancing himself from the narration viewing the action through a window, or through the eyes of different character-protagonists in his poems, avoiding the use of the lyrical 'I'.

⁶²⁹ 'Stanze per la musica di Adriano Guarnieri' in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 966.

⁶³⁰ See Sherry Simon, *Cities in Translation: Intersections of Language and Memory*, New Perspectives in Translation Studies (Abingdon, NY: Routledge, 2012); Loredana Polezzi, *Translating Travel: Contemporary Italian Travel Writing in English Translation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Michael Cronin, *Across the Lines: Travel, Literature, Translation* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000).

⁶³¹ Giovanni Raboni, *Tutte le poesie*, p. 394.

⁶³² *Ibid.*, p. 397.

Later, he admits that the protective skeleton of his discourse was the canonical form of the sonnet.

As one of the first poets to create the myth of the modern city, Baudelaire left a mark on Raboni's personal poetry, not only on a thematic level, but also in terms of poetic form. The choice of the sonnet form, which earned Raboni the epithet of 'l'ultimo dei classici' in the later period of his life, and the personified image of the city (see Chapter 3) that he repeatedly dwells on, might be read as a direct reference to Baudelaire. The choice of form of 'petits poemes en prose' might also be a reference to Baudelaire, the author of *Petits poèmes en prose: Le spleen de Paris* and the landmark for this form of 'la poesia in prosa' in Italy.⁶³³ Baudelaire was one of the first poets to create the modern city as a myth, the central theme of Raboni's lyric.

Furthermore, one of the most powerful images from Raboni's childhood, and his inspiration for writing poetry, was a window in his house in Via San Gregorio representing both protection and an observation point – similar to a metaphor used by Baudelaire. In Raboni's poems we see how people live life inside their homes, starting with Raboni who observes and gains pleasure from seeing people enjoying themselves. A window represents a space in-between, a liminal space often discussed in the literature of the twentieth century. I applied Bakhtin's threshold chronotope for my readings of Raboni's writings, as well as the transitory boundless spaces and the theory of 'non-places' by Augé.

A 'window' is also something magical: dreams, a conduit into the unknown or the past. The lyrical personage is an observer from the past. At the same time, the window protects him from the outside. Even in the *Autoritratto 1977* Raboni imagines the past when the railway station was there before his birth: it is not his childhood and its memories, it is a more distant past, the past of his ancestors.⁶³⁴

The past and his dead relatives are dear to Raboni, a *fil rouge* of his lyric:

Raboni è poeta delle Ombre. Una città di Ombre, la sua Milano, che non era più la Milano del suo tempo, ma una città velata da un nostalgico ricordo. Qualcosa che il poeta cerca traducendo Baudelaire, l'uomo che incessantemente cammina, spesso di notte, sognando l'incontro con le ombre.⁶³⁵

⁶³³ Beltrami, p. 155.

⁶³⁴ Raboni, I.

⁶³⁵ Roberto Mussapi, 'Il modo delle ombre in *Quare tristis*' in Poggi, pp. 88–92, (p.89).

In depicting Raboni's image of the city and tracing the evolution of its representation in his writings, I have drawn on all Raboni's activities, including his translations of Baudelaire, critical writings and journalistic articles. Owing to the word constraints for this thesis I was able to analyse only a limited number of Raboni's poems. I tried to shape the analysis of the selected poems to illustrate different periods of Raboni's poetic activity, looking at poems from his early period (Chapter 3) in terms of thematic elements and fragments of the city. The later writings of the mature poet, including his experience as a translator and literary critic are analysed in more detail in terms of their stylistic expression. I believe that it would be possible to dedicate a separate thesis solely to the dialogue between Raboni and Baudelaire, analysing Raboni's renderings from all five editions of *Les Fleurs du mal*, including a greater selection of poems. However, since the focus of my thesis was on the cityscape and not solely translation, it seemed reasonable to illustrate the dynamic of Raboni's translation through a more limited sample.

An interesting consideration draws a parallel between Baudelaire and Raboni. As Fausto Curi points out, the story of modernity begins with Baudelaire, but especially with the court process that restricted the free will of poetry determining some poems to be inappropriate:

La vera modernità culturale non ha inizio con un fatto culturale, ha inizio con un evento giudiziario. Ha inizio quando la poesia è trascinata in tribunale e il tribunale stabilisce che la poesia non è libera e che il poeta, proprio in quanto poeta, può essere trattato alla stregua di un malfattore. Un evento veramente rivoluzionario.⁶³⁶

Judicial elements, drawn from his previous legal background, feature significantly in Raboni's poetic discourse and contribute to his realistic literary style. Thus we find legal references reflected in his own poetry: Raboni quotes from legal documents, uses legal terms mixing different stylistic registers and unmasks the political situation in his journalistic articles. In an interview with Biondi, Raboni, from a literary critic's point of view rather than a poet's, points out the stylistic characteristics of his verse where he combines high register with

⁶³⁶ Curi, p. 14.

everyday lexis, poetic with prosaic (the same principle adopted in his translation of Baudelaire and developed over years of revisions to his translations, making the colloquial patina more sophisticated within canonical formal constraints): ‘L’altra suggestione è quella del linguaggio giuridico, da codice civile, cioè l’immettere nella poesia la precisione anche la spersonalizzazione, se si vuole, di un linguaggio così freddo: è l’andare della poesia verso la prosa. Questo è una prosa al quadrato, al cubo’.⁶³⁷

Giancarlo Majorino, another poet peer of Raboni, remembers how the reading of other poets was important for both his and Raboni’s own poetic development. Most importantly, among non-Italian poets, he mentions Baudelaire: ‘Saba era uno dei nostri maestri; più tardi Rebora; sul piano internazionale, Baudelaire.’⁶³⁸ In addition, he recalls the time spent together including their trips to Prague, Moscow, and Leningrad:

Non era tanto ‘il miracolo economico’ a sollecitarci, fondato su possibilità economiche e su occasioni di carriera. Eravamo giovani e il piacere di vederci, di stare insieme, di confrontare sintonie e differenze di valutazione, frequentazioni naturalmente in crescendo, famiglie incluse (dapprima con Bianca e i suoi figli; poi con Serena, per viaggi bellissimi a Praga, Mosca, Leningrado) era continuativo.⁶³⁹

As mentioned in Chapter 3 while analysing the poem ‘Appartamento’, Raboni was well travelled. I referred to some interviews between Zucco and Serena Vitale for the Meridiani. However, the links with Slavic, and especially Russian tradition and culture are much deeper than first appears. For my future research my aim would be to study in more depth the ‘Russian’ or ‘Slavic’ period in Raboni’s life as there are many lacunas that need to be explored. Scholars have focused mostly on different periods of Raboni’s production: the earlier verses from *Le case della Vetra* (1966) and the ‘canonical’ period when Raboni started to use the sonnet form, analysing *Ogni terzo pensiero* (1993) and *Quare tristis* (1998). The Russian atmosphere and his earlier childhood reading (when, Raboni read many Russian books, also in Sant’Ambrogio – Tolstoj and

⁶³⁷ Raboni, *L’opera poetica*, p. 1452.

⁶³⁸ Giancarlo Majorino, ‘Ripensando Giovanni’ in Valeria Poggi, *L’emozione della poesia: testi e interventi sull’opera e la figura di Giovanni Raboni* (Azzate (VA): Stampa, 2014), pp. 27–29 (p.27).

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

Dostoevskij referred to in the introduction) left a mark on Raboni's poetry. Collections such as *Il più freddo anno di grazia* (December 1976 - June 1977), *Nel grave sogno* (1982), *Canzonette mortali* (1986), in fact are mentioned rarely by scholars.

Raboni met his second wife, Serena Vitale, at the house of the Slavist Angelo Maria Ripellino in 1969. A period of more than ten years in his life has been given little or no attention. While with Serena Vitale, Raboni often travelled with her because of her studies and projects – translating Osip Mandelštam and Marina Zvetaeva – that she was working on during this time.⁶⁴⁰ We know that Raboni went to Moscow for the first time in 1973 with his wife and their friends, and after that he travelled there on numerous occasions. He met Victor Šklovskij among several other intellectuals – mentioned in the poem 'Una fiaba',⁶⁴¹ including poets such as Mayakovsky and Mandelštam.⁶⁴²

Later Raboni, together with Evgeny Solonovich, a key-translator of Italian poetry to Russian, who is still alive, was also part of the Italian jury in a contest between Russian and Italian writers and translators. Solonovich translated some of Raboni's sonnets into Russian. However, the most interesting example is his translation of a poem for children that is rarely mentioned by Raboni's scholars and is not included in the Meridiani edition, perhaps because it is considered to be children's literature. This work entitled *Un gatto più un gatto*, published separately by Mondadori in 1991,⁶⁴³ was written for the project *Pin pidìn* – a collection of verse for children, edited by Antonio Porta and Giovanni Raboni.⁶⁴⁴ (As stated in the introduction, the book was re-published in 2016 with the

⁶⁴⁰ 'Sono viaggi legati agli interessi di studi di Serena, che lavora, in questi anni, a traduzioni da Osip Mandelštam a Marina Zvetaeva: letture che diventano da subito culturalmente feconde anche per Raboni'. Zucco in Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. ciii.

⁶⁴¹ Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 533.

⁶⁴² Raboni, *L'opera poetica*, p. 1550.

⁶⁴³ It is interesting that the cat acts in a similar way as the protagonist of Raboni's poems, such as PPT and NOOC – crosses the street. As mentioned earlier, Raboni writes also about the same fear of the cars ('musi ringhianti delle automobili' from his article 'Un fascino ritrovato' quoted earlier). For example, the children's book begins with: 'Un gatto più un gatto fa due gatti | un gatto meno un gatto fa un gatto andato via | speriamo che torni presto | che non si perda | che non si faccia male | che per strada stia attento a attraversare [my emphasis]'. See Giovanni Raboni, *Un gatto più un gatto* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1991), p. 1.

⁶⁴⁴ *Pin pidìn: poeti d'oggi per i bambini*, ed. by Antonio Porta and Giovanni Raboni (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978).

drawings by Franco Matticchio).⁶⁴⁵ I would like to analyse the Russian translation by Solonovich, because it represents an interesting case-study and can even be defined as a re-creation, not just translation: out of the 50 lines in the Italian original, Solonovich's translation with the agreement of the author has 88 lines.⁶⁴⁶

I believe that my thesis through the transnational portrayal of Raboni's image of the city and, in general, of Raboni's formation, has identified two potential opportunities for future research projects with a view to continuing this international direction: one would be to shift the focus to France through analysis of Raboni's translations of the various editions of *Les Fleurs du mal*, while another would be an in-depth study of Raboni's connection with Russian intellectuals, Russian literature and including an analysis of his Russian translations.

I end my thesis by returning again to focus on Milan and the epigraph that I have chosen for the conclusion: 'noi viviamo in una specie di città sommersa e dei molti strati vediamo solo l'ultimo'. These words illustrate Raboni's image of the city and his perception of Milan, including the elements and findings addressed in the thesis. The epithet 'sommersa' refers to movement and water at the same time: Raboni's Milan is submerged under water, being a relic of the past. The word 'sommersa' may have a negative connotation with the sense of 'flooded' city – it is often used in an economic or judicial context referring to illegal or hidden operations, for example 'economia sommersa', 'settore sommerso', or 'costo sommerso'. Milan, depicted by Raboni, is in fact 'hidden' and 'invisible' – another important epithet from Raboni's writings. I believe that my thesis and analysis shed new light, revealing new layers in the 'molti strati' that one sees in Milan and that are portrayed in Raboni's writings.

⁶⁴⁵ Giovanni Raboni, *Dal quaderno di aritmetica del gatto Pastrocchio* (Milan: Edizioni Henry Beyle, 2016).

⁶⁴⁶ Giovanni Raboni, *Tetrad po arifmetike kota Kotangensa = Arithmetic exercise book of cat Kotangent*, trans. by Evgeny Solonovich (Moscow: Detskaya literatura, 1982).

Appendices

Appendix 2A: Time and space in ‘Piccola passeggiata trionfale’

In all 9 poems there are references to time

| Poem | Quotation | Meaning |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <i>quasi sessant'anni trentadue, mese più mese meno</i> | Past and present tenses are bound together. |
| 2 | <i>per breve tempo gli sarebbero via via succeduti</i> | Short Future in the past. |
| 3 | <i>durano infinitamente meno ancora per qualche anno</i> | Short period. Future related to the present and the past. |
| 4 | <i>fino alla seconda o terza domenica d'aprile.</i> | Reference to Easter, the past is compared to the present. |
| 5 | <i>nel povero tumulto del crepuscolo</i> | The present tense verbs describe the “dusk” as in the poem “Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere”. |
| 6 | <i>adesso</i> | Present time compared to the past. |
| 7 | <i>scorre da anni</i> | Links between the past and the present tense. |
| 8 | <i>ora l'impercettibile istante</i> | Memories from the past, the link between the past and the present. |
| 9 | <i>un'ultima volta con la lentezza</i> | Present and the near future. |

**Appendix 2B: Prosodic analysis of the poem ‘Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere’,
close reading of each line**

| | Line | Assonan ce | Alliterati on | Several sounds together, phonetic parallelism or internal rhyme. |
|-----------------------------------------|------|---------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nell’ora, ormai, della cenere | 1 | e, a, o | n, l, r | ne-ne, or-or, el-el |
| a pochi passi il corso brulicava | 2 | a, i, o | p, c, r, l | - |
| di commerci frenetici e ingannevoli | 3 | e, i, o | r, c, n | ci-ci, ne-ne |
| e di delitti consumati in sogno | 4 | i, o | d, t, s | ti-ti |
| quando per contagio di quel che resta | 5 | a, o, e | q, n, r | qu-qu, er-er |
| d’un antico ricetta di sventure, | 6 | i, e, u | d, n, t, r | - |
| cinque camini e sei finestre in tutto | 7 | i, e | n, s | in-in-in-in |
| di mattoni color sangue, avviliti | 8 | a, o, i | t, l | - |
| ora, loro, da miasmi micidiali | 9 | o, a, i | r, l, d, m | or-or, mi-mi-mi |
| più dell’intero un tempo dal famoso | 10 | e, a, o | n, t, d, m | nte-nte |
| flagello di cui si legge nei libri | 11 | e, i | l, g | ge-ge |
| considerai con l’immaginazione | 12 | o, i, a | c, n | con-con |
| l’immensa prateria purgatoriale | 13 | i, e, a | p, r, t, l | ria-ria |
| che da quella fronte invisibilmente | 14 | e, a, i | k, l, n, t | nte-nte |
| sin quasi agli invisibili bastioni | 15 | i, a | s, b | si-si-si, ib-ib |
| aveva per suo centro San Carlino | 16 | a, o | s, r, n | - |
| come l’ostia la sua goccia di sangue | 17 | o, a | l, s, g | - |
| quando inginocchiato premevo gli occhi | 18 | i, a, e, o | n, k | occhi-occhi |
| con le mani per vera contrizione | 19 | o, e | k, n, r | con-con, er-er |
| dopo un fantasticato sacrilegio | 20 | o, a, i | n, t, s | - |
| e pensai che lui, sì, non gli spagnoli | 21 | i, o | p, s, l, n | - |
| ci aveva ammassati lì come agnelli | 22 | a, i, e | m, l | li-li |
| per sterminarli. Che colpe, le stesse | 23 | e | p, r, s, t | ste-ste |
| o altre m’inchiodano bolgia a bolgia | 24 | o, a | l, b, dz | bolgia-bolgia |
| a questo rione dove tante volte | 25 | a, e, o | v, t, n | te-te |
| sono nato e morto e resuscitato | 26 | o, a | s, t, r | ato-to-ato |
| da perderne il conto, tiepida, tetra | 27 | e, o, a | r, d, n, t | er-er |
| giungla battuta palmo a palmo in cerca | 28 | u, a | t, l, p, m | palmo-palmo |
| di vaghe assoluzioni – così andavo | 29 | i, a, o | v | - |
| domandando al mio cuore e rivedevo | 30 | o, a, e | d, n, m, v | and-and, do-do |
| intanto di seguito alle reliquie | 31 | i, o, e | n, t, l | to-to, nt-nt |
| della strage, sul medesimo lato | 32 | e, a, e | d, s, l, m | de-de, la-la |
| di quella fenditura di mannaia | 33 | i, e, a | d, n | di-di-di |
| dove stavo strisciando, un altro luogo | 34 | o, a | d, s, t, n, l | st-st, do-do |
| d’abominio e salvezza, un cinemino | 35 | a, i | n, m | min-in-min |
| di puttane a poco prezzo da poco | 36 | o | p, c | poco-poco |
| redento in supermarket. Mai scambiata, | 37 | e, a | r, n, t, m | ma-ma |
| s’intende, una parola: se ci andavo | 38 | e, a, o, i | n, d | nd-nd |
| così spesso alle dieci, dieci e mezza | 39 | o, i, e | s, d, c | dieci-dieci |
| di mattina mentre a casa pensavano | 40 | i, a, e | m, t, s, n | en-en, sa-sa |
| che fossi al Parini o al Carducci era | 41 | a, i | r, k | ar-ar |
| per amore infinito di quel buio | 42 | e, o, i | r, n | in-in |
| pagato in anticipo in stropicciate | 43 | a, i | p, n, t | in-in, ci-ci |
| agonizzanti amlire, anestesia | 44 | a, i, e | n, t, s | an-an |
| o abiura dei miei grotteschi rimorsi | 45 | a, e, i, o | r, s | ei-ei |
| d’adolescente. E non potrei giurarlo | 46 | e, o, a | n, r | - |
| ma forse fu proprio lì, nell’arsura | 47 | o, a | f, p, r, s, l | pr-pr, rs-rs |
| atroce degli intervalli, aspettando | 48 | e, a | t, r, n | - |
| che quel buio tornasse come un balsamo | 49 | u, o, e, a | k, m | - |
| su un’ustione che cominciai a pregare | 50 | u, a, e | k, s, r | re-re |
| come faccio ancora, e sempre in latino, | 51 | o, a, e, i | k, m, n | co-co, in-in |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|----|---------------|------------|---------------------|
| ogni volta che per troppo silenzio | 52 | o, i, e | l, p, r | - |
| o troppa luce il cuore si contorce | 53 | o, u, e | l, k, c, r | ce-ce |
| ignominiosamente. Ma perché, | 54 | i, o, e | m, n | - |
| mi chiedo, già allora, se erano ancora | 55 | a, e, o | d, r, n | ora-ora |
| tutti vivi? e rispondo che l'angoscia | 56 | i, o, a | n | - |
| ha astuzie che la ragione non può | 57 | a, o, e | n | - |
| sventare – o forse era precisamente | 58 | a, e, o | n, t, r | ent-ent, re-re |
| per loro, perché niente succedesse, | 59 | e, o | p, r, n, s | per-per |
| perché nessuno avesse l'impudenza | 60 | e | p, n, s | ess-ess |
| di morire me vivo; e invece l'onta | 61 | o, e, i | m, v, n | - |
| della morte si sarebbe abbattuta | 62 | e, a | s, r, b, t | bb-bb |
| di schianto, subdolamente, nel giro | 63 | a, e, o | s, n, t, l | nt-nt |
| di pochissimi anni sul decoro | 64 | i, o | d, s | - |
| della famiglia... Incredibile: c'erano | 65 | e, i | d, r, n | - |
| altri sconvolgimenti, altre catastrofi | 66 | a, o, i, e | l, t, r, s | tr-tr-tr |
| oltre quelli delle mie inadempienze! | 67 | e, i | l, d, m, n | (tr), de-de |
| Ma non anticipiamo, in quel momento | 68 | a, o, e | m, n, t | mo-mo, nt-nt |
| il problema ero ancora io, il mio | 69 | o, e, a | r, l, m | il-il, ro-ro, io-io |
| rannicchiarmi nel buio scricchiolante | 70 | a, i, o, e | r, n, k, l | io-io, cchi-cchi |
| del cinema Modena come un feto | 71 | e, o | n, m, d | de-de |
| dentro il ventre materno e come uscirne | 72 | e, o | n, t, r, m | entr-entr, rn-rn |
| senza strangolarli. La relativa | 73 | e, a, i | s, n, r, l | lar-lar-la |
| normalità dei miei cinquanta e passa | 74 | e, a | m, n | ei-ei |
| anni successivi può comprovare | 75 | a, i, o | s, p, r | - |
| l'accaduto, non spiegarlo: se so | 76 | a, o | l, s | - |
| d'essermi liberato del terrore | 77 | e, i, o | d, r, l | de-de, er-er-er |
| non so ancora per quanto, né in che modo, | 78 | o, a, e | n, r, k | - |
| e credo che non meno inconsapevole | 79 | e, o | k, n | no-no, on-on |
| sia stato secoli fa, a qualche metro, | 80 | a, e, o, i | s, l | - |
| l'attonito sciamare dei superstiti | 81 | a, o, i | t, s, r | to-to, ti-ti |
| della peste verso le meraviglie | 82 | e | s, l, r | peste-verso, er-er |
| di un'usuale carestia. Di loro | 83 | u, a, e, i, o | s, d, l | di-di |
| niente, nei libri o altrove; né dei morti | 84 | e, i, o | n, l, r, t | ne-ne |
| portati via a carrettate, sepolti | 85 | a, i, e, o | p, r, t | po-po, at-at, ti-ti |
| come viene in qualche foppone, all'ombra | 86 | o, e, a | m, n, l | ne-ne, om-om |
| d'un filare di gelsi. Quanto all'ospite | 87 | a, i, o, e | d, l, t | - |
| del cinema-fantasma, al qui scrivente, | 88 | e, i, a | n, m, t | ma-ma, nt-nt |
| stia un po' zitto adesso, se n'ha abbastanza | 89 | i, o, e, a | s, t, n | st-st |
| delle sue querimonie: nessun nesso | 90 | e, o | n | ness-ness |
| fra il resistere a dispetto dei santi | 91 | i, e, a | r, s, t, d | re-re |
| di quelle sante macerie, quei ruderi | 92 | e, a, u, i | q, r | que-que, ri-ri |
| d'un'antica misericordia e | 93 | u, i, a | d, k | - |
| questo abietto monumento invisibile | 94 | u, o, e, i | t, m, n, b | to-to-to |
| alla sua infanzia interminata. Meglio | 95 | u, a, i | n, m, t | in-in-in |
| muoversi, affrettare l'incerto passo | 96 | u, o, a, e | r, t | er-er, re-re |
| prima che la cenere solidifichi | 97 | i, e | k, l | - |
| alla volta del gran fiume imminente | 98 | a, i, e | l, m, n | - |
| e lì svoltare, perdersi, svanire. | 99 | e, a, i | s, v, r | sv-sv, re-re, er-er |

**Appendix 3A: The full text of six poems exceeding 13 lines in length
analysed in Chapter 3**

1) The poem 'Una volta'

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------|----|
| Di gente ricca solo | 1 |
| coi bachi e le filande credo | 2 |
| non ci sia più nessuno: ma una volta | 3 |
| nel Comasco o a Bergamo, da dove | 4 |
| viene la mia famiglia, | 5 |
| molte fortune si contavano a gelsi | 6 |
| e con quante ragazze venivano a filare | 7 |
| i bozzoli scottati per ammazzare le farfalle | 8 |
| nelle fredde officine. Se penso | 9 |
| a chi è la gente ricca adesso, a cosa | 10 |
| gli costa il capitale, | 11 |
| mi convinco che tutto si complica, anche il male. | 12 |
| Una volta le colpe dei padroni | 13 |
| erano così semplici! Il padrone | 14 |
| d'oggi, consiglio d'amministrazione | 15 |
| o gruppo di maggioranza, è un peccatore | 16 |
| un po' troppo sui generis per me... | 17 |

2) The poem 'Città dall'alto'

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---|
| Queste strade che salgono alle mura | 1 |
| non hanno orizzonte, vedi: urtano un cielo | 2 |
| bianco e netto, senz'alberi, come un fiume che volta. | 3 |
| Dei signori e dei cani. | 4 |
| Da qui alle processioni che recano guinzagli, stendardi | 5 |
| reggendosi la coda | 6 |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| ci saranno novanta passi, cento, non di più: però più giù, nel fondo della | 7 |
| [città | |
| divisa in quadrati (puoi contarli) e dolce | 8 |
| come un catino... e poco più avanti | 9 |
| la cattedrale, di cinque ordini sovrapposti: e proseguendo | 10 |
| a destra, in diagonale, per altri | 11 |
| trenta o quaranta passi – una spanna: continua a leggere | 12 |
| come in una mappa – imbrotti in pieno l'asse della piazza | 13 |
| costruita sulle rocciose fondamenta del circo | 14 |
| romano | 15 |
| grigia ellisse quieta dove | 16 |
| dormono o si trascinano enormi, obesi, ingrassati | 17 |
| come capponi, rimpinzati a volontà | 18 |
| di carni e borgogna purché non escano dalla piazza! i poveri | 19 |
| della città. A metà tra i due fuochi | 20 |
| lì, tra quattrocento anni | 21 |
| impiantano la ghigliottina. | 22 |

3) The poem 'I morti e i veri'

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|----|
| Nella casa umida, il poco | 1 |
| ch'è asciutto sembra più asciutto ancora: | 2 |
| nelle stanze da letto al primo piano | 3 |
| il pavimento d'assi quasi bianche | 4 |
| non lucidate con la cera e | 5 |
| un po' distanti; sotto, nella sala | 6 |
| del bigliardo, l'avorio dei birilli | 7 |
| messi in croce... (Prima o dopo ci torno | 8 |
| a vedere la casa degli amici | 9 |
| dove a momenti ti nasceva un figlio | 10 |
| – è nato due giorni dopo – e s'aspettava, | 11 |
| di sera, che il temporale portasse | 12 |
| un po' di fresco anche a Milano. Smorti | 13 |
| lungo i muri, con facce da lenoni | 14 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|----|
| o da tartufi, oscuri | 15 |
| antenati lombardi | 16 |
| controllavano il conto delle uova | 17 |
| e dei formaggi: usando astuzia, e quantità | 18 |
| di penne d’oca. Si rideva di loro | 19 |
| con ribrezzo. Ma in fondo, che sia giusto | 20 |
| così? Meglio dei nostri veri, gente | 21 |
| distratta, malinconica | 22 |
| per vizi più sottili, chi può dire | 23 |
| che non sia quello il tipo d’antenati | 24 |
| che nostro figlio fingerà d’avere, ridendo | 25 |
| di loro, voltandogli le spalle | 26 |
| come nessuno è mai riuscito a fare!) | 27 |

4) The poem ‘Appartamento’

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | |
| Passa, dicono, le giornate | 1 |
| con addosso un pigiama, una vestaglia. A chi | 2 |
| gli consiglia d’uscire, di muoversi, altrimenti | 3 |
| i muscoli, alla sua età, si atrofizzano, le giunture | 4 |
| si bloccano, risponde | 5 |
| con un dolce, lento sorriso. | 6 |
| 2 | |
| Caverna, bunker, mucosa, | 1 |
| spolverati libri che nessuno | 2 |
| leggerà né scompiglia, | 3 |
| grande schermo millimetrato della concentrazione, | 4 |
| dell’introiezione – e dovrebbe | 5 |
| spegnerlo, vestirsi, arrischiare le ossa | 6 |
| nell’aria confusa, piena di polline? | 7 |
| 3 | |
| Va piano piano alla finestra | 1 |

| | |
|----------------------------------------|---|
| a vedere se nevica ancora, se continua | 2 |
| nel buio luminoso, là fuori | 3 |
| l'infantile disastro del mondo. | 4 |

5) The poem 'Interno esterno'

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|----|
| La poltrona di faggio e canna d'India | 1 |
| lasciata a dondolare | 2 |
| tra pianoforte verticale e muro, | 3 |
| la brace che si vede e non si vede | 4 |
| nel suo povero loculo di ghisa | 5 |
| e fuori ripide le scale, nera | 6 |
| la balaustra, greve | 7 |
| la nebbia in questo grumo | 8 |
| di stradine, Laghetto, Pasquirolo, | 9 |
| pressi della croce del Verziere dove | 10 |
| han già messo gli antoni alle botteghe | 11 |
| e se c'è ancora un po' di luce viene | 12 |
| da bottiglierie livide, fumose | 13 |
| di questurini in borghese | 14 |
| intenti a fingersi intenti | 15 |
| al tressette, al calice, alle grazie sfiorite | 16 |
| della padrona | 17 |
| lentamente si ferma, lentamente | 18 |
| si spegne. | 19 |

6) The poem 'Ogni tanto succede'

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Ogni tanto succede | 1 |
| d'attraversare Piazza Fontana. | 2 |
| Come parecchie piazze di Milano | 3 |
| anche Piazza Fontana | 4 |
| con le sue quattro piante stente | 5 |
| e il suo perimetro sfuggente | 6 |
| | 7 |

| | |
|------------------------------------------|----|
| come se ormai nessuna geometria | 8 |
| fosse non dico praticabile | 9 |
| ma neanche concepibile | 10 |
| più che una piazza vera a propria | 11 |
| è il rimpianto o il rimorso d'una piazza | 12 |
| o forse addirittura (e non per tutti | 13 |
| ma solo per chi da tempo coltiva | 14 |
| più pensieri di morte che di vita) | 15 |
| nient'altro che il suo nome. | |

Appendix 4A: The full text of the poem ‘Le Cygne’ by Baudelaire and its translations by Raboni analysed in Chapter 4

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Le Cygne, Charles Baudelaire À Victor Hugo I | |
| Andromaque, je pense à vous! Ce petit fleuve, Pauvre et triste miroir où jadis resplendit L'immense majesté de vos douleurs de veuve, Ce Simois menteur qui par vos pleurs grandit, | 4 |
| A fécondé soudain ma mémoire fertile, Comme je traversais le nouveau Carrousel. Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville Change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel); | 8 |
| Je ne vois qu'en esprit tout ce camp de baraques, Ces tas de chapiteaux ébauchés et de fûts, Les herbes, les gros blocs verdis par l'eau des flaques, Et, brillant aux carreaux, le bric-à-brac confus. | 12 |
| Là s'étalait jadis une ménagerie; Là je vis, un matin, à l'heure où sous les cieux Froids et clairs le Travail s'éveille, où la voirie Pousse un sombre ouragan dans l'air silencieux, | 16 |
| Un cygne qui s'était évadé de sa cage, Et, de ses pieds palmés frottant le pavé sec, Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage. Près d'un ruisseau sans eau la bête ouvrant le bec | 20 |
| Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre, Et disait, le coeur plein de son beau lac natal: «Eau, quand donc pleuvras-tu? quand tonneras-tu, foudre?» Je vois ce malheureux, mythe étrange et fatal, | 24 |
| Vers le ciel quelquefois, comme l'homme d'Ovide, Vers le ciel ironique et cruellement bleu, Sur son cou convulsif tendant sa tête avide Comme s'il adressait des reproches à Dieu! | 28 |
| II Paris change! mais rien dans ma mélancolie N'a bougé! palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs, Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs. | 32 |
| Aussi devant ce Louvre une image m'opprime: Je pense à mon grand cygne, avec ses gestes fous, Comme les exilés, ridicule et sublime Et rongé d'un désir sans trêve! et puis à vous, | 36 |
| Andromaque, des bras d'un grand époux tombée, Vil bétail, sous la main du superbe Pyrrhus, Auprès d'un tombeau vide en extase courbée Veuve d'Hector, hélas! et femme d'Hélénus! | 40 |
| Je pense à la négresse, amaigrie et phtisique Piétinant dans la boue, et cherchant, l'oeil hagard, | |

Les cocotiers absents de la superbe Afrique
Derrière la muraille immense du brouillard; 44

À quiconque a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve
Jamais, jamais! à ceux qui s'abreuvent de pleurs
Et têtent la Douleur comme une bonne louve!
Aux maigres orphelins séchant comme des fleurs! 48

Ainsi dans la forêt où mon esprit s'exile
Un vieux Souvenir sonne à plein souffle du cor!
Je pense aux matelots oubliés dans une île,
Aux captifs, aux vaincus!... à bien d'autres encor! 52

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| 1973 È a te che penso, Andromaca... Questo stento fiume, misero, opaco specchio dove un tempo rifulse, immensa, la maestà del tuo dolore, questo Simoe bugiardo che ingrossa del tuo pianto, 4 | 1987 È a te che penso, Andromaca! Questo stento fiume, misero, opaco specchio dove un tempo rifulse, immensa, la maestà del tuo dolore, Simoenta bugiardo che ingrossa del tuo pianto, 4 |
| nel traversare il nuovo Carosello, d'improvviso fecondò la mia fertile memoria. Parigi, la vecchia Parigi scompare. Più veloce del nostro cuore muta una città. 8 | nel traversare il nuovo Carosello, d'improvviso fecondò la mia fertile memoria. Parigi, la vecchia Parigi scompare (una città muta di forma , ahimè!, più veloce d'un cuore); 8 |
| Solo con gli occhi della mente vedo la distesa delle baracche, capitelli sbozzati, fusti a mucchi, erbe, massi verdastrì per le pozze, il [confuso bric-à-brac che dai vetri riluce. Là sorgeva, 12 | solo con gli occhi della mente vedo la distesa delle baracche, capitelli... sbozzati, e fusti a mucchi, erbe, massi verdastrì per le pozze, confuso bric-à-brac rilucente dai vetri. Là sorgeva, 12 |
| altro tempo, un serraglio; là un mattino, all'ora che sotto un alto, algido cielo il Lavoro si sveglia e dalle strade s'alza un cupo uragano nell'aria silenziosa, 16 | altro tempo, un serraglio; là un mattino, all'ora che sotto un alto, algido cielo il Lavoro si sveglia e dalle strade s'alza un cupo uragano nell'aria silenziosa, 16 |
| dalla sua gabbia un cigno era fuggito. Io lo vidi: raspava l'arido selciato con i piedi palmati, le bianche piume trascinava sul ruvido suolo. Spalancando a un secco rigagnolo il becco, l'animale, 20 | dalla sua gabbia un cigno era fuggito. Io lo vidi: raspava l'arido selciato con i piedi palmati, le bianche piume trascinava sullo scabroso suolo. Spalancando a un secco rigagnolo il becco, l'animale, 20 |
| convulso, bagnava le ali nella polvere e con il cuore colmo del suo lago natale, quando, diceva, pioggia, cadrai? Quando, diceva, tuonerai, folgore? Io lo vidi, 24 | convulso, bagnava le ali nella polvere e con il cuore colmo del suo lago natale, quando, diceva, pioggia, cadrai? quando, diceva, tuonerai, folgore? Io lo vidi, 24 |
| essere sventurato, mito strano e fatale, a tratti, come l'uomo d'Ovidio, verso il cielo, l'ironico, il crudelmente azzurro cielo, sul frenetico collo tender l'avida testa, quasi a riproverare Dio! 28 | essere sventurato, mito strano e fatale, a tratti, come l'uomo d'Ovidio, verso il cielo, l'ironico, il crudelmente azzurro cielo, sul frenetico collo tender l'avida testa, quasi a riproverasse Dio! 28 |
| II Parigi cambia - ma niente, nella mia malinconia, s'è spostato: palazzi, impalcature, case, vecchi sobborghi, tutto per me diventa l'allegoria, sono più saldi di rocce i miei ricordi. 32 | II Parigi cambia! ma niente, nella mia malinconia, s'è spostato: palazzi rifatti, impalcature, case, vecchi sobborghi, tutto per me diventa l'allegoria; pesano come rocce il ricordi che amo. 32 |

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| <p>Così, davanti al Louvre, m'opprime una figura: penso al mio grande cigno, ai gesti folli che faceva, esule comico e sublime che un desiderio morde senza fine; e a te, 36</p> <p>Andromaca! dall'abbraccio di un grande sposo rotolata, deprezzato agnello, fra le mani di Pirro superbo, e su una vuota tomba reclinata in estasi; vedova d'Ettore, ahimè!, e d'Eleno consorte! 40</p> <p>Penso alla negra tisica e smagrita che strisciando nel fango s'affanna, stralunata, dietro l'immenso muro della nebbia a vedere gli assenti alberi di cocco dell'Africa superba; 44</p> <p>a chi ha perduto ciò che non si trova mai più, mai più! e s'ebbevera di pianto e succhia latte al Dolore come a una buona lupa! ai magri orfani, secchi come fiori! 48</p> <p>Nel bosco, dove il mio cuore va esule, così risuona alto il richiamo di un Ricordo antico. ...Ai marinai su un'isola d'oblio, ai prigionieri, ai vinti... agli altri, ad altri ancora! 52</p> | <p>Così, davanti al Louvre, m'opprime una figura: penso al mio grande cigno, ai gesti folli che faceva, esule comico e sublime che un desiderio morde senza fine — e a te, 36</p> <p>Andromaca! dall'abbraccio di un grande sposo rotolata, deprezzato agnello, nelle mani dell'orgoglioso Pirro, e in estasi reclinata su una tomba deserta; vedova d'Ettore, ahimè!, e d'Eleno consorte! 40</p> <p>Penso alla negra tisica e smagrita che strisciando nel fango s'affanna, stralunata, dietro l'immenso muro della nebbia a vedere gli assenti alberi di cocco dell'Africa superba; 44</p> <p>a chi ha perduto ciò che non si trova mai più, mai più! e s'ebbevera di pianto e succhia latte al Dolore come a una buona lupa! ai magri orfani, secchi come fiori! 48</p> <p>Nel bosco, dove il mio cuore va esule, così risuona alto il richiamo di un Ricordo antico! Penso ai marinai su un'isola obliati, ai prigionieri, ai vinti... ad altri, ad altri ancora! 52</p> |
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| <p>1992, 1996 È a te che penso, Andromaca! Questo stento fiume, misero, opaco specchio dove un tempo rifulse, immensa, la maestà del tuo dolore, Simoenta bugiardo gonfiato dal tuo pianto, 4</p> <p>nel traversare il nuovo Carosello, d'un tratto fecondò la mia fertile memoria. Parigi, la vecchia Parigi è sparita (più veloce d'un cuore, ahimè, cambia la forma d'una città); soltanto 8</p> <p>la mente adesso vede la distesa delle baracche, i mucchi di fusti e capitelli sbozzati, l'erba, i massi che le pozze inverdiscono, il bric-à-brac confuso che dai vetri riluce. 12</p> <p>Là sorgeva un serraglio; là un mattino, all'ora che sotto un alto, algido cielo il Lavoro si sveglia e dalle strade s'alza un cupo uragano nell'aria silenziosa, 16</p> <p>vidi un cigno, fuggito dalla sua gabbia, l'arido selciato raspando con i piedi palmati, le bianche piume strascinare al suolo. Aprendo a un secco rigagnolo il becco, l'animale 20</p> <p>bagnava convulso le ali nella polvere e con il cuore colmo del suo lago natale, quando, pioggia, cadrà? quando, diceva, tuonerai, folgore? Mito strano e fatale, 24</p> <p>lo vedo, l'infelice, come l'uomo d'Ovidio,</p> | <p>1999 È a te che penso, Andromaca! Questo stento fiume, misero, opaco specchio dove un tempo rifulse, immensa, la maestà del tuo dolore, Simoenta bugiardo gonfiato dal tuo pianto, 4</p> <p>nel traversare il nuovo Carosello, d'un tratto fecondò la mia fertile memoria. Parigi, la vecchia Parigi è sparita (più veloce d'un cuore, ahimè, cambia la forma d'una città); soltanto 8</p> <p>la mente adesso vede la distesa delle baracche, i mucchi di fusti e capitelli sbozzati, l'erba, i massi che le pozze inverdiscono, il bric-à-brac confuso che dai vetri riluce. 12</p> <p>Là sorgeva un serraglio; là un mattino, all'ora che sotto un alto, algido cielo il Lavoro si sveglia e dalle strade s'alza un cupo uragano nell'aria silenziosa, 16</p> <p>vidi un cigno, fuggito dalla sua gabbia, l'arido selciato raspando con i piedi palmati, le bianche piume strascinare al suolo. Aprendo a un secco rigagnolo il becco, l'animale 20</p> <p>bagnava convulso le ali nella polvere e con il cuore colmo del suo lago natale, quando, pioggia, cadrà? quando, diceva, tuonerai, folgore? Mito strano e fatale, 24</p> <p>lo vedo, l'infelice, come l'uomo d'Ovidio,</p> |
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| al cielo crudelmente azzurro e ironico sul frenetico collo tender l' avida testa, a volte, quasi a rimbrottare Dio! | 28 | al cielo crudelmente azzurro e ironico sul frenetico collo tender l' avida testa, a tratti, come a rimbrottare Dio! | 28 |
| II Parigi cambia! ma niente, nella mia malinconia, s'è spostato: palazzi rifatti, impalcature, case, vecchi sobborghi, tutto m'è allegoria; pesano come rocce il ricordi che amo. | 32 | II Parigi cambia! ma niente, nella mia malinconia, s'è spostato: palazzi rifatti, impalcature, case, vecchi sobborghi, tutto m'è allegoria; pesano come rocce il ricordi che amo. | 32 |
| Così, davanti al Louvre, m'opprime una figura: penso al mio grande cigno, ai gesti folli che faceva, esule comico e sublime che un desiderio morde senza fine — e a te, | 36 | Così, davanti al Louvre, m'opprime una figura: penso al mio grande cigno, ai gesti folli che faceva, esule comico e sublime che un desiderio morde senza fine — e a te, | 36 |
| Andromaca! dall'abbraccio di un grande sposo rotolata, deprezzato agnello, nelle mani orgogliose di Pirro, e china in estasi su una tomba deserta; vedova d'Ettore, ahimé! e d'Eleno consorte! | 40 | Andromaca! dall'abbraccio di un grande sposo rotolata, deprezzato agnello, nelle mani orgogliose di Pirro, e china in estasi su una tomba deserta; vedova d'Ettore, ahimé! e d'Eleno consorte! | 40 |
| Penso alla negra tistica e smagrita che strisciando nel fango s'affanna, stralunata, dietro l'immenso muro della nebbia a vedere gli assenti alberi di cocco dell'Africa superba; | 44 | Penso alla negra tistica e smagrita che pestando nel fango s'affanna, stralunata, dietro l'immenso muro della nebbia a vedere gli assenti alberi di cocco dell'Africa superba; | 44 |
| a chi ha perduto ciò che non si trova mai più, mai più! e s'ebbevera di pianto e succhia latte al Dolore come a una buona lupa! ai magri orfani, secchi come fiori! | 48 | a chi ha perduto ciò che non si trova mai più, mai più! e s'ebbevera di pianto e succhia latte al Dolore come a una buona lupa! ai magri orfani, secchi come fiori! | 48 |
| Nel bosco, dove il mio cuore va esule, così risuona alto il richiamo di un Ricordo antico! Penso ai marinai su un'isola obliati, ai prigionieri, ai vinti... ad altri, ad altri ancora! | 52 | Nel bosco, dove il mio cuore va esule, così risuona alto il richiamo di un Ricordo antico! Penso ai marinai obliati su un'isola, ai prigionieri, ai vinti... ad altri, ad altri ancora! | 52 |

Bibliography

A short note about Raboni's texts in the bibliography.

This thesis has illustrated that Raboni's intertwined literary activities do not allow us to separate clearly his roles of poet, literary critic and translator. However, due to the vast body of work he produced in all three fields which cannot be covered in one study, my focus has of necessity narrowed. In the primary texts I have included Raboni's major writings as a poet, in prose and in verse, and five editions of his translations of Baudelaire. All other translations and Raboni's critical writings are listed in the secondary texts section, as well as the translations of Raboni's poetry into English and Russian.

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